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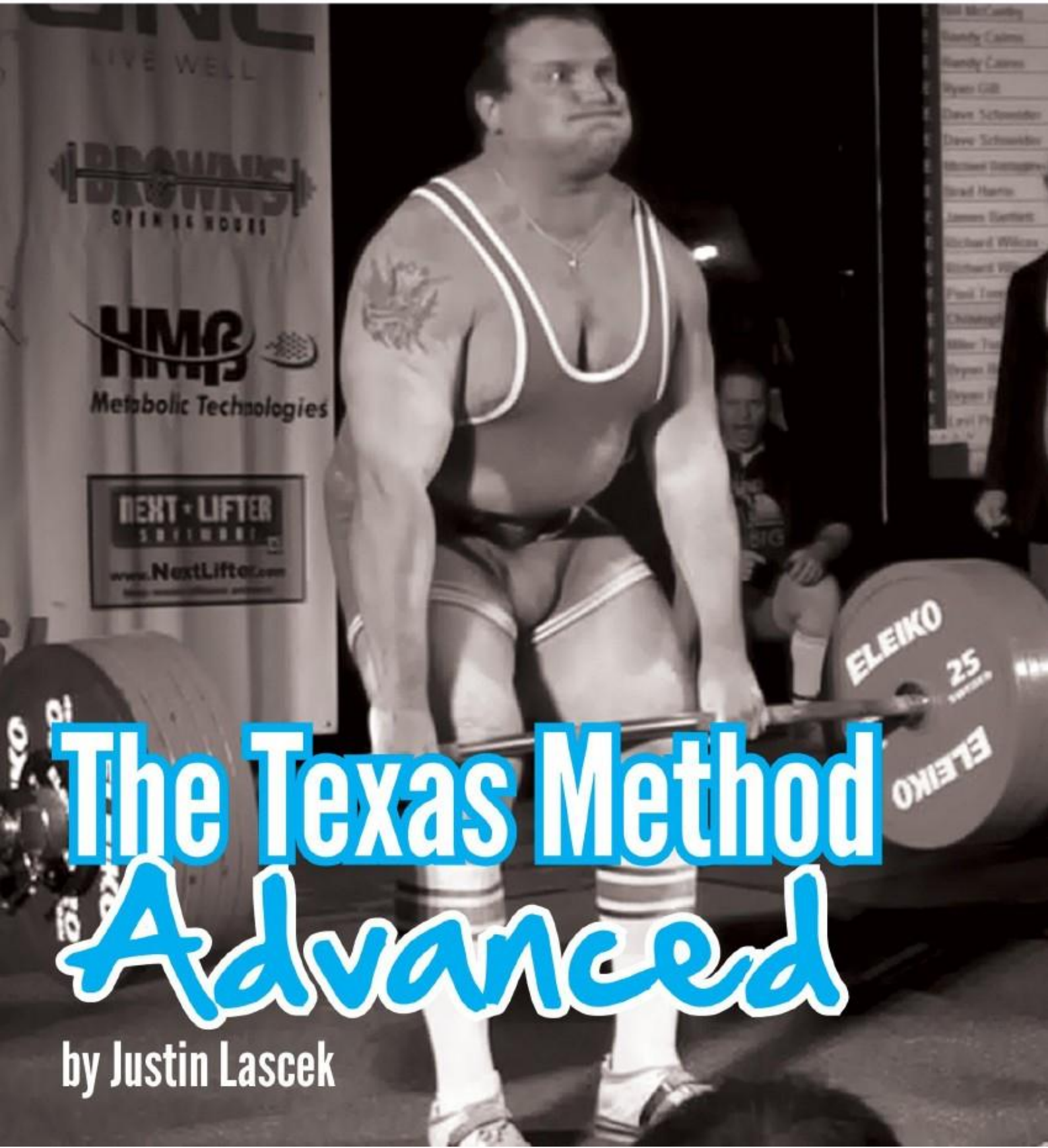

The Texas Method Advanced

by Justin Lascek

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The information presented herein is not intended for the treatment or prevention of any disease, nor as a substitute or alternative to medical treatment. This publication is presented for educational purposes only and in an effort to increase the reader's general knowledge of strength and conditioning. The information and program outlined within should not be adopted without a consultation with your healthcare provider. The information and program outlined within is solely intended for healthy individuals of 18 years and older. Be sure that your equipment is well-maintained prior to practicing the exercises provided within. All forms of exercise pose inherent risks. Do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and fitness.

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FORWARD

Action without plan is chaos.

We are creatures of order and structure. Look at the Vatican. The Great Wall of China. Apple products. The hallmark of human civilization is the hope, the dream of structure in a world inexorably spinning into entropy.

And thus our training programs are microcosms of our greater struggle in an unpredictable world. It is the only way in which neckbeard fuckheads can find peace, in neatly-calculated excel spreadsheets which dictate their exercises and workloads on a daily basis.

Justin of all people realizes I will never read this book. But I can't deny that there are concepts in this book that have guided my training despite my every effort to confound any outside observer's attempts at finding a pattern or sense of reason to my training efforts.

Ideally, the concepts in this book will be as helpful to you as they have been, and continue to be, for me. Maybe they'll give you a little *push*.

-Brent Kim

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for purchasing this book. I thoroughly enjoy coaching and teaching people and am grateful that so many fine people are willing to learn. I'd like to thank Jacob Cloud and Steven Collegio for helping me through the grueling process of creating this book. Jacob's copy editing skills and Steven's regular graphic design make me look better than I actually am. Thank you to my close friends – Shawn, Chris, Brent, Mike and AC – who have shared the love of training and allowed me to learn all that I have. Thank you to all of the mentors and role models in the realm of fitness and strength and conditioning; I am honored to know such men like Lon Kilgore and Michael Hartman. Thank you to all of the friends who I have met along the way in this quest of 70's Big; you are all too numerous to recount but no less important. Lastly, thank you to the 70's Big readers; you guys make this whole thing fun, even if you're annoying as hell.

This book assumes a healthy, drug-free trainee with *at least* halfway decent mobility, technique, and recovery capabilities. Individuals with existing pathology – anatomical, neuroendocrine, or otherwise, will receive and adapt to stress differently. Results may vary for trainees and lifters who are lazy and do not implement good mobility, nutrition, and recovery habits. Because these factors determine the success of a program, it is hereby assumed that the factors are adequately addressed by the reader. Serious trainees will benefit from a quality coach to verify that their technique is adequate for the execution of this program. Most of all, this book assumes a trainee with a training history that would prepare them adequately for the intermediate programs within.

All photos are used with permission from the respective lifter's video or under my ownership. Many photos are screen capped from videos; it ensures that pictures are of real training instead of staged positions.

CHAPTER 1 – Relativity of Volume

In *The Texas Method E-book: Part I,* the reader was introduced to a weekly style of programming summed up as "The Texas Method" (TM). The book explains how to transition from a linear progression program to a proper TM template, gives guidelines on how to progress effectively, and discusses modifications with various sub-goals tacked onto the strength program. Part 1 was written because many trainees across the internet were getting chewed up due to the high amount of volume associated with the original template as discussed in *Practical Programming,* by Mark Rippetoe and Lon Kilgore. The program outline primarily refers to squatting and consists of a Volume Day (5x5 sets across), a Light Day (3x5 with lighter weight), and an Intensity Day (5RM) with an emphasis on increasing both the Volume and Intensity Days. If the trainee sticks to the program, the Volume Day often becomes so taxing that the trainee fails to lift any significant weight later in the week; overall progress quickly stalls.

It was quite easy to see that the swelling amount of volume was to blame for the lack of productivity on the Intensity Day. *Understanding volume and how to manipulate it is key in transitioning into and out of intermediate programming.*

Concerning Volume

Volume and intensity have an inverse relationship. High levels of volume have a profound effect on the body's structures and system (as anyone who has done too many 5x5s can attest). However, the "high volume" designation is relative. If a person routinely squats three sets of two, or six total repetitions, in their program, and they attempt five sets of five, or 25 total repetitions, their world will be turned upside down. Several consecutive weeks at a suddenly increased volume will result in compounding the recovery deficit until the body breaks down. It is entirely too many reps whereas fewer would have sufficed; if a little bit is needed, why do a lot?

In Part 1 of this book, a 5x5 is still recommended for someone transitioning to the TM from a linear progression program, in which the weekly work set reps (ignoring warm-up reps) are typically between 30 and 45 (three sets of five done two to three times a week). When shifting to an intermediate program, the trainee will not be able to apply a significant stress by decreasing the total weekly reps below 20. Instead, we manipulate the daily stress - from 15 total reps in a linear progression, to 20 to 25 reps on the TM Volume Day (VD). The Intensity Day (ID) will then typically consist of about five reps (using the 1/5th guideline from Part 1). The result is a weekly rep total similar to a linear progression, but distributed throughout the week in order to create a more appropriate stress for an intermediate lifter. Because the lifter was adapted to "three sets of five" in a linear progression, they need the "five sets of five" when first transitioning to The Texas Method to induce a quality stress. The Volume Day will be dependent on what the lifter is adapted to in their previous program. If a lifter's previous program

consisted primarily of doubles, then the Volume Day could consist of “three sets of five” since “five sets of five” would be overkill.

However, after the transition phase is over, the Volume Day will no longer be increased weekly. The guidelines given in Part 1 maintain the VD for at least three weeks, and later in this book we will see how it may be held constant for several months. When the VD is kept the same and the ID is increased every week, this lowers the relative volume since absolute strength is still being increased every week. In other words, the trainee gets stronger each week (via the Intensity Day) without increasing the volume, so the volume becomes a lower percentage of 1RM. In this case, the volume is passively lowered due to increasing strength.

Volume can also be purposely reduced if it is too high to allow for proper recovery. In this case it should be lowered in small increments so that the overall stress is not severely and suddenly changed. For example, if the trainee has been using 5x5 with sets across, he would not suddenly drop to an ascending 3x5. Instead, he would transition to a 3x5 with sets across. This actively decreases the volume (yet it should not be necessary if the guidelines from Part 1 are implemented correctly). Conversely, he would not merely drop from a 5x5 to an ascending 5x5 as it would not result in a significant tonnage drop. Tonnage can be calculated by multiplying the weight and reps together and is typically only done for the work sets.

Figure 1.1 shows the difference in total tonnage between squatting 405 for five sets of five across, ascending sets up to 405 (with increments of 20 pounds between sets), and 405 for three sets of five across. Three sets of five has a much lower tonnage than 5x5 – it is 60% of the 5x5 and a work load decrease of 4,050 lbs. The ascending 5x5 (with 20 pound jumps between sets) is only 90% of the regular 5x5, or a reduction in 1,000 pounds of tonnage. In the event of too much fatigue as a result of using 405x5x5, the trainee should drop to 405x5x3 in order to have a clear reduction in stress.

Comparison Of 5x5, Ascending 5x5, And 3x5		
405x5x5=10,125	405x5=2025 385x5=1925 365x5=1825 345x5=1725 325x5=1625 **Total: 9,125**	405x5x3=6,075

Figure 1.1

When the volume is reduced or stays low as the ID is increased weekly, the gap between the VD and ID widens. In other words, more weight is lifted on ID with proportionally lower amounts on VD. It puts the trainee into position to use a lower threshold of volume, resulting in less local and systemic stress. The discrepancy can be measured in pounds, as it was in Part 1, or as a percent. Typically the VD should not

be more than 90% of the ID and works very well around 85% (note that this is not a percentage of 1RM, but of the weight lifted on ID). If the lifter is above 85%, he should work to bring it down and to see if he can still make gains on his ID with a sub 85% VD. Females may benefit from even lower percentages due to their lack of neuromuscular efficiency.

Justin squats 435x5x5 in 2009 before realizing it isn't necessary.

To review, there are three primary concepts. The first concept is that *the volume utilized in a program is relative to what the current trainee is adapted to.* A person who has been using Jim Wendler's 5/3/1 program (which emphasizes relatively low volume) would not begin using a 5x5 on their VD (instead, a 3x5 would work). A trainee transitioning from a standard linear progression will use the 5x5, but will benefit from lowering this volume over time. This brings forth the second concept: *use as little volume as possible to get stronger.* Minimizing levels of volume ensures long-term progress because it prevents local and systemic break down. The third concept is that *the act of lowering the volume (actively or passively) will act as a stress in itself.* Whereas it was generally accepted that the VD has to increase to get stronger, strength gains are also augmented from decreasing the relative volume.

These three concepts lay the foundation for manipulating volume and intensity to garner progress. When a lifter reduces their relative volume, they essentially apply as little stress as possible to get stronger (by increasing the weekly ID). This means the lifter increases his sensitivity to volume. A lifter that is insensitive to volume – the "volume warrior" – can perform an exemplary amount of tonnage yet doesn't get much stronger because the dose of stress is far too high. A lifter that establishes his sensitivity to volume can subtly tweak it up and down to elicit strength increases. This is analogous to insulin sensitivity. If a trainee is insensitive to insulin – an extremely anabolic hormone – then they are not able to reap the benefits of a proper insulin spike. Actually having a sensitivity to insulin means that a lifter can take advantage of the anabolic hormonal response to eating a protein and carbohydrate

dense meal prior to training to maximize his lifting session. By being sensitive to volume, a lifter can use it appropriately to induce a systemic stress and increase strength.

These concepts explain why this program is effective for intermediate programming. The novice principle of "just do more" prevalent in linear progressions will no longer work. The Texas Method helps dedicated trainees make sustained weekly progress for general strength and raw powerlifting. We will see that the base template can be used for raw powerlifting in Chapter 2, how significant tweaks can be made to garner progress in the later intermediate stages in Chapters 3 and 4, and how these modifications can eventually act as a stepping stone into advanced programming in Chapter 4. This book gives lifters a map to navigate through the realm of intermediate programming. While the Texas Method is a useful intermediate transition, the real quest to strength begins with the principles in The Advanced Texas Method.

CHAPTER 2 – Using the TM for Powerlifting

A TM set up works very well for powerlifting because the weekly program can be improved for meet preparation. I prefer it to more complicated programs because it allows the trainee to go heavy on a weekly basis, which is important after a linear progression. Despite the strength increases that occur in linear progressions, a trainee will be un-adapted to heavier training loads (especially with weights closer to 1RM). This chapter is aimed at a trainee who has either not competed in powerlifting or is still relatively inexperienced (less than 18 months of competing). Trainees of this type shouldn't worry about winning their weight class or cutting weight and should primarily focusing on having a successful meet by completing nine of nine attempts and matching or setting personal records.

Benefits of the TM for Powerlifting

The regular TM set up, as described in Part 1, works well for meet preparation. It garners a bit of volume in the week to increase strength, but can also increase muscle size with an appropriate diet. It is better than more advanced programs because they often take several months to peak and apply more volume than the intermediate trainee requires. If a dose of x volume will work, then why use x+5, or 10x? Early intermediate trainees are able to still increase their strength weekly; an advanced program will blunt their progress potential. It is not that the trainee can't make gains on a more advanced program; it is that advanced programs have a slower rate of progress and don't take the trainee's current volume adaptation into consideration.

The TM inherently has the trainee lifting heavy on their Intensity Day, but some advanced programs will have several weeks of loading before shifting into the heavier loads. Fresh intermediate lifters need this weekly experience with heavier weights physiologically, but also psychologically. The trainee's nervous system, musculature, and blood vessels need to adapt to the stress of heavy lifting, but it is just as important to improve confidence with heavier loads. It will teach the trainee their limits, how to fight through near maximal lifts, and provide the successful experience of doing it regularly.

The TM also has the trainee deadlifting on the Intensity Day, but after squatting and benching. This concept seems absurd to experienced powerlifters, yet it is incredibly beneficial for beginners. Experienced powerlifters are often near or approaching the upper limit of their potential given their lean body mass and a heavy squat session won't leave much in the tank for a heavy deadlift session. This may be true for our inexperienced intermediate lifter, but to a much smaller degree and is irrelevant until later in the lifter's development. It is more important for the trainee to garner the experience of pulling heavy after squatting heavy since that's what he'll have to do at the meet. Intermediate lifters are not perfectly balanced; their lifts and musculature may still be disproportionate. I've seen too many deadlifts missed in meets because the new lifter lacks the strength, musculature, and sometimes

conditioning to hit a third, or even second attempt in a long meet. Training the deadlift properly after the squat will help eliminate this problem and is a must for strength trainees making the jump into powerlifting.

There are plenty of other subtle or obvious benefits in using the TM for powerlifting. It trains the tested lifts – squat, bench, and deadlift – regularly and makes them stronger. It allows some basic, yet useful assistance exercises to be used that augment the contested lifts. It is a simple, easy to use template that is vastly improved with the concept of lowering the relative volume presented in Part 1. Now let's make some subtle modifications to prepare a trainee for powerlifting. Note that most of these tweaks also apply to a non-powerlifting general strength trainee.

Tweaks for Powerlifting

Triples on Intensity Day

The first change I make when someone wants to compete in powerlifting is to change the Intensity Day rep schemes of the contested lifts to triples. While the trainee is given the option of using rep schemes that total about 1/5 of the number of volume reps, I prefer one heavy triple. By consistently using triples on Intensity Day, there isn't any guess work on what their level of strength is at any point in the program. In other words, keeping the reps the same every week and allowing them to increase will serve as a marker for strength improvement.

The triple will also a) allow the trainee to use a higher percentage of their max compared to one set of five or multiple sets of doubles or triples, b) reduce the "time under tension" compared to a set of five, c) help increase the discrepancy between the Volume and Intensity, and d) it will reduce the tonnage of the Intensity Day workout.

The heavier weight associated with triples will give a more accurate depiction of the lifter's top-end strength and help him plan meet attempts. The decreased time under tension and tonnage allow for better long-term recovery and prevents the program from grinding to a halt due to overreaching. Controlling the amount of volume done at high intensity is just as important as controlling the Volume Day.

Pausing the Bench

Another change that I implement several months out of the first meet is to start learning how to pause the bench press. Most powerlifting federations will require the bar to remain on the chest motionless followed by a command to press it back up. Pausing is a skill that must be learned; the trainee must learn how to use their developed strength in a very specific way. Trainees can begin this learning curve

by pausing some of their lighter warm-ups as well as the first rep of their volume sets. If every rep on the volume set were paused, it would limit the weight, reps, and sets the trainee could perform by unnecessarily tiring them out. Pausing the first rep of volume sets will still get some practice in without fatigue. The trainee could also do a couple of paused singles after the heavy triple on Intensity Day by reducing the load by about 10% and practicing the pause with a higher weight than what they handled during Volume Day. Doing this for a couple of months will develop the skill and confidence of pausing that will be applied into the taper for the first meet.

AC benches 425x2 on his second double.

All of this, of course, is dependent on a technically sound bench – proper elbow placement and foot drive. If the trainee internally rotates at the shoulder – flares the elbows – then all of this is irrelevant. Improving this fault leaves the scope of this e-book, but in the event of internal rotation, the trainee should drop their volume weight and do each rep correctly. Improper bench technique over time will cause shoulder problems and injuries. Paused benching is dependent on efficient technique.

There are many ways to drive the feet into the ground, but the general focus should be on pinching the upper back, lifting the chest, and driving the legs so that both the weight of the lifter and the bar are primarily on the pinched upper back. This all must be done while the butt remains on the bench. Without proper set-up, foot placement and drive, upper back pinching, and proper external rotation in

the shoulder, the paused bench will be horse pucky. The learning thereof leaves the scope of this book; future resources may be available, but until then readers should find a good coach.

Romanian Deadlifts (RDLs)

Most trainees and lifters, including intermediates, do not have good musculature balance across their bodies. Balanced musculature allows a lifter to perform above average in a variety of lifts or activities. The most common weakness or lack of development across all populations would be at the hamstrings. It is very easy to squat (even low-bar) and deadlift without utilizing the hamstrings to their maximum potential. The squat can shift forward at the bottom to emphasize the distal quads, and the movement will neglect the posterior chain and emulates a leg press on the ascent. The deadlift can be pulled off the floor by rounding the lower back, reducing hamstring tension, getting the bar past the knees with a painfully ugly round back, pushing the knees forward under the bar, and then quad pressed up while the hunchback is straightened out. It is even possible for an individual to deadlift more weight this way, yet it doesn't distribute the load appropriately in the body, doesn't help improve musculature, and is typically injurious (I've talked with, consulted with, and coached many people with lumbar/sacral issues – including bulging discs – all as a result of poor deadlifting technique).

This is why I love the RDL for hamstring development – so much that I now consider it a staple in any program, including the TM. For an in-depth anatomical analysis of the movement see this article, which I will summarize here:

> Hold the bar in the hang position (or a completed deadlift) with a hip-width stance. Un-lock the knees, but do not bend them anymore throughout the rest of the movement. Push the butt and hips back as if you were trying to touch a wall behind you while keeping the lower back flat or arched. The bar should stay back, close to the legs. Keep the feet flat on the floor (do not rock back on the heels or bring the toes up). The back will angle downwards, approaching parallel with the floor, but not passing parallel. The proximal, or upper, hamstring should receive a stretch. Reverse the movement either when the stretch cannot continue, the back is parallel with the floor, or the lumbar spine is pulled out of a good, extended position. Tight trainees will not be able to get to parallel and should reverse the movement when tension is applied to the proximal hamstrings.
>
> Cues: "Hips back, knees back", "Bar back", and "Flat feet"
>
> It is imperative that the lower back stays locked and that the knees remain unlocked, but don't bend any further. If the knees flex any more, then the hamstrings will shorten to reduce their tension. If the knees straighten, or lock out, then the emphasis will shift to the distal, or lower, hamstrings. Either way, it decreases the effectiveness of the exercise.

The bottom position of the RDL: "Hips back, knees back."

Place RDLs early in the week on Volume or Assistance Day; note that this is the opposite end of the week from the deadlifts. If there is a lack in hamstring musculature, they should be performed for three sets of eight to ten reps to garner growth. If the hamstring musculature is developed, they can be performed for three sets of five reps and progressed for strength. The weight used can be maintained for several weeks at a time. Soreness is a good marker for adaptation to a given weight; once it lessens or doesn't occur with a given weight, then the weight can be increased the following workout. There's an emphasis on a slow progression because RDLs are often done with too much weight and done incorrectly with much less benefit on the hamstrings. If the weight reaches a point in which the technique cannot be maintained, then either decrease the weight or increase the reps-per-set towards ten reps. The RDL is an exercise that is dependent on muscular action instead of merely moving weight from point A to B.

Even if trainees are not powerlifting, I consider RDLs a valuable assistance exercise for ALL programs and trainees. Rack pulls are also beneficial for developing hamstrings' ability to maintain massive amounts of tension associated in locking out deadlifts. They will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Weekly Benching

After using a TM template for four to six months, the trainee may find that their bench doesn't increase as well as they had hoped. This is an observation I made while programming others, and I don't like it. The bench is comprised of a smaller amount of musculature compared to the squat and deadlift, so it won't increase at the same rate. However, benching heavy only twice a month (by alternating the emphasis on press and bench each week) does not garner an appropriate amount of work for good increases. Instead, let's do it every week.

Instead of benching five sets of five reps every other week, we will instead bench three sets of five on every Volume Day. The Intensity Day remains as a top triple. The drop in volume will account for any

over-stressing that can occur in the muscles associated with more frequent benching; even healthy shoulders can get a bit beaten up from benching. This doesn't mean that pressing is dropped from the program; pressing is incredibly important for shoulder stability and health. All of my powerlifters express discomfort or pain when they have to reduce pressing to get ready for a meet. In the standard, three day TM template, pressing will remain for three sets of five on Light Day. It can be progressed every week, yet it may interfere with the bench intensity workout. If it does, then the trainee can alternate doing a heavier three sets of five reps in week A with a medium three sets of five reps in week B. Chapter 3 also provides other strategies for benching and pressing every week.

Heavy/Medium Press Alternate On Light Day			
	Monday	**Wednesday**	**Friday**
Week A	Bench 3x5	Press 3x5 Heavy	Bench 3RM
Week B	Bench 3x5	Press 3x5 Medium	Bench 3RM

Figure 2.1

Using Ladder Reps for Bench

Some trainees may not want to progress into weekly benching because they're worried their shoulders can't handle the increased work load. Trainees who internally rotate their shoulders during the bench will need a set/rep scheme to accumulate work with correct technique. In both of these cases, using a ladder rep scheme may help.

Ladders have been around for a long time, but after seeing an old post from Steve Shafley on Power and Bulk, I started to program them more often. They can be used in three ways; to garner more work and volume with lighter weight, to accumulate significant volume with heavier loads in a single session, or to push the weight as heavy as possible but distributing it over a ladder rep scheme instead of repeating sets with equal number of reps. This section focuses on the former as it can help develop musculature and motor pathways for correct benching (with proper external rotation) and provide a low, yet progressive stress to ease into benching twice a week, every week.

A ladder is comprised of doing a set of one rep, then two reps, then three reps. One ladder equals a total of six reps. Grouping several ladders together can garner decent amounts of volume and work, yet do so without damaging musculature stress since the emphasis is on loads that are easy to move. Three ladders are equal to 18 reps, four ladders are 24 reps, and five ladders are 30 reps. Each set can be done on a one minute clock - this knocks out five ladders in a mere fifteen minutes (this technique was developed by my friend Mike Battaglino).

The trainee who is progressing into benching twice a week and the trainee who internally rotates should pick a relatively easy weight – one that doesn't require much strain on *any* of the ladder reps – and do four or five ladders on both bench days. The trainees could maintain this for four weeks and maybe progress the weight by five pounds every week; this would mean they use the same weight for both bench days every week. After the four weeks, they can transition into the normal 3x5 VD and 3RM ID, or shift into some other options (including heavy ladders) detailed in Chapter 3.

Phases

Depending on when the next meet is, a powerlifter will benefit from altering the structure of his training. Naming these training phases will organize their respective programming templates. The first phase is simply the *Off Season.* During this phase, there isn't a meet planned within the next three months and the trainee is working on getting stronger, but may dabble in other side-goals. The next phase, and the most important, is the *Meet Prep* phase. It occurs within two to three months of the meet and is when training funnels into the event and ancillary goals are put on hold. *The Taper* is the two to four week phase where volume is reduced and specific preparations are made for the meet. For our purposes, this usually means getting practice within the rules and regulations. The *Post Meet* phase is a short diversion from lifting to give the mind and body time off from rigorous lifting. These phases can be cycled continuously over time between evenly scheduled meets throughout the year.

Off Season

This is the time when aesthetic or performance weaknesses can be addressed. Does the lifter carry too much body fat? Do they have a hamstring or upper back weakness? Do they need to fill out their upper body musculature? The techniques described in Part 1 of this two part e-book can be utilized to address some of these issues.

Performing conditioning in the off-season is acceptable, but any more than two days a week of conditioning may interfere with strength training's recovery. The intensity doesn't have to be significantly high; pulling a sled, carrying implements, or pushing a truck are simple, yet effective conditioning workouts. The goal would be to develop or maintain an above average level of conditioning to help with general recovery as well as recovery in between sets. Light conditioning that is void of eccentric work is excellent at providing a stress that promotes systemic recovery. Pulling a sled (with a harness so that the upper body musculature is not being used) with a light load is a good recovery workout used by many powerlifters. Whether it is Louie Simmons with light sleds or Vasiliy Alekseyev wading through a river, the benefits of light recovery work for strength athletes have been well tested.

If the trainee is still unfamiliar with pausing in the bench, then he can still practice this in the Off Season. However, if he's decent at it, he will forgo pausing in order to handle the most weight possible in this

phase. For example, Alex Battaglino did not have much experience with benching prior to the 2011 USAPL Raw Nationals. We had him pause every rep from that point on, and when he lifted at the 2012 NAPF Raw Challenge, he benched 182.5kg (402.3 lbs), a significant improvement over the previous year's 172.5 kg (380 lbs).

Meet Prep

The meet prep could last anywhere from two to four months, although three is usually ideal. If there was an ancillary focus – gaining size in the arms and chest or dropping body fat – then the training emphasis will shift back to focus solely on strength development. Each Intensity Day will be taken more seriously and the trainee will aim to progress consistently. The only assistance that will be used here will be the movements that augment the main lifts like RDLs, weighted pull-ups/chin-ups, close-grip bench, weighted dips, and barbell rows. Using too many assistance exercises will spread recovery ability too thin.

If triples haven't been used on Intensity Day, then the trainee will shift back into them. The paused bench will be used on Volume Days and back-off singles on Intensity Day if needed; regular ID bench sets are still "touch and go". The RDL should be regularly used early in the week for the same reasons described earlier in this chapter. Weekly benching can occur, but the trainee shouldn't worry about doing ladder reps twice a week as this is more of an Off Season programming technique. Instead the trainee should focus on using these several months to get work with heavier weights. If there is still a shoulder internal rotation issue, then aim to improve it on VD while trying to push the weight on ID. By doing this, the problem can be put on hold until after the meet. If the internal rotation is causing shoulder problems, then the trainee can maintain a lighter work load on bench and do whatever they can at the meet; there's no sense in trashing the shoulder just to prep for a routine meet. Besides, the first few meets are primarily used to build experience anyway.

The theme of the Meet Prep phase is to reduce and focus. The trainee has all of the tools to get strong, now he needs to primarily make improvements on the ID in the main lifts. Figure 2.2 shows the standard TM template that the Meet Prep phase should revolve around while Figure 2.3 adds in the Assistance Day. Assistance exercises in the meet prep will only consist of critical compound exercises. Note that the set/rep scheme will reflect what the trainee is adapted to, so VD could be five sets of five instead of three sets of five.

Standard TM Template		
Monday (Volume)	**Wednesday (Light)**	**Friday (Intensity)**
Squat 3x5	Light Squat	Squat 3RM
Bench 3x5	Light Press	Bench 3RM
RDL 3x5		DL 3RM

Figure 2.2

TM With Assistance Day			
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Friday**
Squat 3x5	RDL 3x5	Light Squat	Squat 3RM
Bench 3x5	Wtd Dips	Light Press	Bench 3RM
Wtd Pull-Ups			DL 3RM

Figure 2.3

The Taper

Tapers are often over-emphasized for recreational lifters. It stems from seeing world or Olympic class athletes on annual or quadrennial programs that peak every year or every four years respectively. Elite athletes often have their programs designed months or years in advance. New or inexperienced powerlifters will only require a few days to taper for a meet. Linear progression users can use a meet as a training day yet will need to make conservative choices for their attempts. A trainee on a linear progression can perform their Monday workout as normal, do a lighter Wednesday workout, and then compete at a meet on Saturday.

TM template users can do the same thing. They can hit their volume day, have a normal light day, and then use the meet on Saturday as their ID. If the trainee is already using triples on Intensity Day, then they are nearly prepped for the event anyway. However, most people will not compete in meets off the cuff like Bill Starr and his friends at York Barbell. New competitors are typically nervous and will want a bit more preparation. A short taper can help the body with a subtle physiological peak for the event, but more importantly, it provides a time to learn the commands of the contested lifts. The following taper applies to trainees who have had a normal Meet Prep phase of about three months using triples.

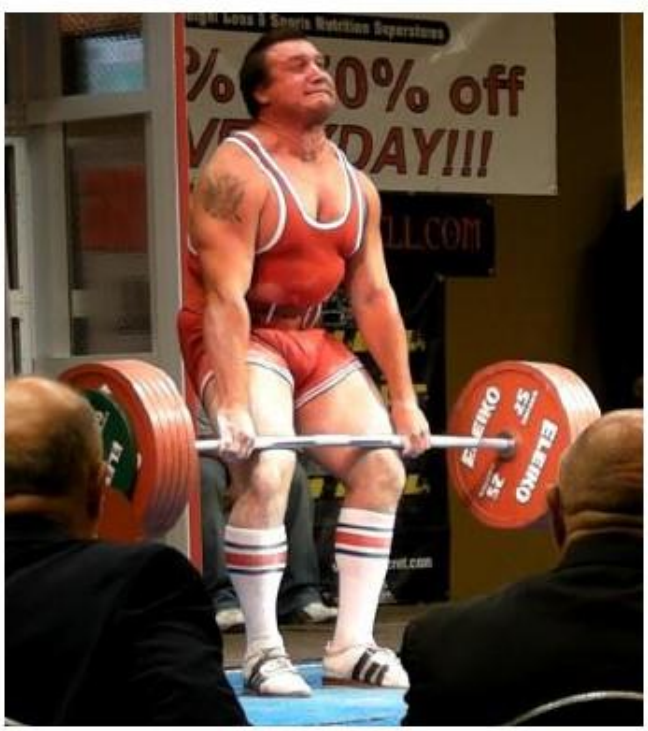
Beginner Taper

Beginner Taper			
Weeks Out	**Monday**	**Wednesday**	**Friday**
2	Squat 5x5 Bench 5x5 RDL 3x5 (Normal Volume Day) Squat 3x5	Normal Light Day	Squat Singles* Bench Singles* Deadlift Singles*
1	Bench 3x5 RDL 3x5 (Reduce Volume) Squat Bench	Light Squat Light Press	Squat Bench (Single To Openers)
0	(Single To Last Warm-Up)	Very Light Squat Very Light Bench	Meet

Figure 2.4

This taper aims to keep things almost identical to the Meet Prep phase with a few modifications. The trainee will perform their regular volume day when they are two weeks out from the meet. The example indicates five sets of five, but some trainees will have already shifted into three sets of five in their program – either way, the normal volume is used. Light Day will be conducted as normal with the regular press workout. The first change occurs on Intensity Day: the trainee will squat and bench heavier ascending singles *with all of the commands from a mock judge.* There are two focal points: the heavier weight and the judge.

The trainee will squat between three and five singles with the first being the same weight as their last successful triple or ten pounds less than that. The trainee will add weight conservatively – no more than ten pound increments – with subsequent singles. The goal is *not* to max out, but instead to experience heavier weight than what has been used on the weekly triples. This will be the heaviest squat day before the meet, but, again, the trainee *will not max out.* Maxing out is what happens at the meet. The trainee should feel confident that they could have done more weight – the entire point is to build confidence instead of destroying it by missing reps.



Leave the maxing out for the meet.

Another reason that the trainee won't max out is because they are supposed to be hitting the contested lifts with commands. It is imperative that meet conditions are emulated as closely to the real event as possible – to the extent of having a "judge" sit in a chair in front of the lifter while squatting. Despite

having people do this, and despite reminding them (loudly) to "listen to the commands", they *still* manage to mess this up at a meet. Before this training session, the trainee and involved parties (mock judges) should have read and understood the rule book associated with the federation they will be competing in. Trainees should contact the meet director if they have any questions (there will also be an opportunity to ask questions at the rules briefing, but trainees should understand everything beforehand so that they practice everything properly). This will be the single most beneficial thing the trainee can do to influence their success at the meet. Elaborations on practicing the rules are below.

After practicing the squat and bench commands, the trainee will deadlift three singles at the weight they were prescribed to do for a triple. This will get them several practice singles with the judge's command. A contest deadlift is hard to mess up and this practice will ensure success. If the trainee has done at least one meet, they can do a triple instead of singles. There are some other deadlifting taper options later in this chapter.

Volume Day one week out from the meet will see a reduction in volume. If the trainee was using five sets of five, then he'll drop to three sets of five. If he was using three sets of five, then he'll drop to an "ascending three sets of five" scheme with each set increasing by 5%, or about 20 pounds for most male lifters (the last set will be the same weight as the week before). These changes will subtly drop the volume on squat and bench, but still apply the similar amounts of intensity.

Volume Change Examples For Beginner Taper		
Normal Volume:5x5 e.g. 405x5x5		**3x5** 405x5x3
Reduced Volume:3x5 e.g. 405x5x3		**Ascending 3x5** 365x5 385x5 405x5

Figure 2.5

Light Day will consist of a similar workout that includes pressing, yet the press workout will be lighter than the previous week. Intensity Day will consist of a similar mock-meet scenario as the week before, yet the lifter will only work up to their openers and cap their total reps at three. There is no deadlifting whatsoever unless it is light (under 60%) for a few reps. This prevents greedy lifters from doing too much the week before the meet; they won't be getting any stronger in seven days' time and will benefit more from extra recovery.

During the week of the meet, the Volume Day will primarily consist of working up to the last warm-up (the last weight the lifter will complete in the warm-up room prior to their opener at the meet) for one or two singles on squat and bench. The Light Day is a lighter squat and bench day designed *only to get*

the blood moving. Loads must stay lighter than 60% on this final Light Day. The meet will occur two or three days later.

Medium Taper – Extra Practice

Medium Taper - Extra Practice			
Weeks Out	**Monday**	**Wednesday**	**Friday**
3	Squat 5x5 Bench 5x5 RDL 3x5 (Normal Volume Day) Squat 3x5	Normal Light Day	Squat Singles Bench Singles Deadlift Heavy (Using Commands For SQ/BP) Squat Heavy Singles
2	Bench 3x5 RDL 3x5 (Reduced Volume Day) Squat 3x5 Bench 3x5	Light Day With Lighter Press	Bench Heavy Singles Deadlift Single (85-90%) (Push Weight, Use commands) Squat To Opener Bench To Opener
1	RDL 3x5 (Ascending Sets) Squat Bench (Single To Last Warm-Up)	Light Squat No Press	(With Commands)
0		Very Light Squat Very Light Bench (With Commands)	Meet

Figure 2.6

This taper is similar to the Beginner Taper, but it adds another week. The volume reduction starts a week earlier, but it also adds another session to practice the rules. The deadlift process is also slightly different; after hitting a triple three weeks out, the next week consists of a moderate single. This will let the lifter pull a heavier single after squatting heavier and provide another data point to choose attempts for the meet. Trainees who have been using a TM set up for a while may prefer this if they have had several months of very hard training or haven't been able to recover well (due to a lousy schedule or lack of good sleep and food). Despite directions to keep the Volume Day under control, lifters will still over stress themselves and this gradual reduction in volume will produce a recovery rebound for the meet. These two tapers merely provide an outline for the lifter to try. After doing it a few times, they will tweak it to suit their needs.

Three weeks out constitutes a regular training week until the Intensity Day that is comprised of squat and bench singles in a mock-meet format. The goal with these singles is the same as the beginner meet: start learning the commands and experience some weight that is a little heavier than recent triples. Hit a

single at the triple weight, and perform a few more in ascending fashion (and not increasing more than ten pounds per set). The lifter should create a mock-meet atmosphere with a judge sitting in front of them in a chair. They can even squat in a different rack, bar, or gym to emulate the strangeness associated with a meet. After squatting the lifter will lift their prescribed triple on deadlift, but they can do singles with the triple weight (as in the Beginner Taper) if they prefer.

Two weeks out, the Volume Day will be reduced to three sets of five. The Light Day's press workout will be lighter, and Intensity Day will consist of trying to push the weight on squat and bench with the rules. It isn't necessary to change equipment or location during this week. The goal in this week is to increase higher than the previous week, but not to max out. The lifter should aim to hit a "second attempt weight" on squat and bench. In order to maintain confidence and taper properly, they should *not* hit maximal-effort reps (i.e. third attempt weight). Maximal attempts should be saved for the meet.

The deadlift workout will consist of working up to a single between 85 and 90% of their assumed 1RM at the meet. If the lifter is relatively inexperienced, then they should be conservative with their assumed 1RM. Again, this shouldn't be a maximal lift and will act as a confidence booster and a data point for what to try and hit on the third attempt at the meet.

One week out the Volume Day will reduce down to ascending sets, yet the lifter can keep the same volume as the week before if they feel it is necessary. The approach is simple: if the lifter is feeling run down, then use ascending sets. It is wise to be conservative here. Light Day pressing can be lighter than normal, or it can be removed completely to continue the taper. Friday continues the mock-meet mentality: the lifter will only work up to their opener on the squat and bench, using commands from a judge. There is no need to get extra reps; they should just hit their openers solidly and go home. There is no deadlift the week before the meet.

In the first workout in the week of the meet, the lifter will work up to his last warm-up on squat and bench and then get out of the gym. On the light day, he will only do a few reps with less than 60% of his estimated 1RM. The goal is to simply do some light reps to get the blood flowing and emulate the normal light day. If the meet is on Saturday or Sunday, the lifter can move this light workout to Thursday or Friday.

Complications

The lifter should be aware that there are countless other variables that will affect a taper. These may include the physical stress of dropping weight and the psychological stress of a competition. Travelling is also an unforeseen problem due to the disruption in eating schedule and being cramped into a sitting position for a long period of time. If the lifter hasn't travelled a long distance (by car or plane) for a meet before, then they should plan to lift a little less than what they intend to. When analyzing what did or didn't help in preparing for a meet, all of these seemingly irrelevant issues should come into consideration since they, along with the taper, are a piece of the preparation puzzle.

Mock-Meet

The last section referenced practicing the commands during a taper to prepare for a meet. This is a basic outline describing how to follow the commands in training to prevent missed lifts at the meet. This should be implemented on the designated days (typically the Intensity Day) in the taper outlines above. The inexperienced trainee should warm-up with the commands as well as using them on his singles; this will accumulate even more practice. Rules may vary based on federation, but the following applies to most. Some points are not required by rule, but will help prevent any mental mistakes at the meet. Points of emphasis are italicized, and should be noted carefully.

Squat Rules: Trainees will un-rack the barbell, walk it out, get stable, and then *look at the judge in the chair in front of them.* The judge will have his hand up, palm-out, and once he gets confirmation from other judges (that are not present in the mock-meet) that the lifter is under control with the knees locked out, he will shout, "Start!" and lower his hand quickly. The trainee will then *look back to their normal visual point of reference, take a big breath, and then begin the squat as normal.* Read that last sentence again. And again. This will eliminate any weirdness at the meet with taking a breath before the judge says anything, with having an incorrect eye gaze, or missing the command. After completing the squat, the trainee will *look back at the judge* and wait for the "Rack!" command.

Bench Rules: Trainees will receive a lift-off (sometimes from a friend in local or state meets, but national meets will have a designated person doing this for everyone), and will *wait for the "Start!" command from the judge.* Read the last sentence at least six times. Inexperienced lifters, especially those who like to jack their adrenaline up, will forget this most of the time. After the judge yells, "Start!" the lifter will lower the bar to their chest and pause while maintaining tension and control and will *wait for the "Press!" command.* This is typically ingrained in the lifter's head since they have practiced it for a few months, so the emphasis here is staying as tight as possible. Once the lifter presses the bar, he'll *wait for a "Rack!" command* – this is the second most missed command on the bench, so be sure to focus on it.

Deadlift Rules: Pick the bar up. Lift your chest at the top. Wait for the "Down!" command. Return the bar to the ground *with your hands on the bar.* If you let go of the bar, then you can, and should, be ejected from the meet. This pisses the judges off; show some respect. It is okay to put the bar down quickly – almost at a speed equal to dropping it – but the trainee should not remove his hands until the bar is back on the ground. Most new lifters don't have a problem with the deadlift command; just wait for the down signal.

Mike deadlifts 578 at the 2010 USAPL Nationals.

A Tip on Cues: It is difficult to remember these simple cues while under duress at a meet. Hopefully the lifter will have a coach or friend "handling" them to help choose attempts. This handler can use the subtle, yet clear cue of "Wait" when the lifter needs to wait for a cue. After having my silly friends miss bench cues after telling them "wait for the commands", I started using "wait" with much better results. It is concise, clear, and they don't have to think about it. Just don't shout it sharply; sharp cues (in any setting) will produce sharp, jerky results. We don't need a jerky reaction, merely a reminder to wait. Handlers will say the word loudly and clearly, and almost draw the word out. The opposite would be an exclamation of "Stop!" or "Shit!" Instead, pretend like a nagging mother is saying the name of their troublesome kid, "Jerryyyyyyyyy". This will come out as "Waaaaiiiit."

The Meet

This book focuses on how to program the TM in order to prepare for a meet, but this mini-section will provide some brief information on the meet itself. The taper should give the lifter ample opportunity to plan all of his attempts. He should write them down on a piece of paper to take to the meet. Most, if not all, lifters will be entirely too gung-ho and plan on huge PR's. This is naïve as the lifter should plan to first go 9/9, then match current PR's, and then possibly garner small PR's. Doing well and having a fun time is most important early in the powerlifting career. Plan the attempts conservatively and also write down two tracks: a best-case scenario and a worst-case scenario. Worst-case scenario would be used if a lift felt or looked harder than it should have been, or if anything goes wrong (and things *will* go wrong). Ancient samurais would envision their death on a daily basis so that they would not fear it in battle. The lifter should do the same and plan for things to go wrong and decide beforehand how they will respond – this will eliminate any indecision when at the meet.

Since most federations use kilograms, be sure to print a powerlifting kilo conversion chart. Most meets will have this available, but if they aren't it is helpful to have a personal copy. Write all attempts in both pounds and kilos in the plan. It is standard to make 10kg (22 lbs) jumps on squat and 7kg (~15 lbs) on bench press. Deadlift is a little different. It works really well to take the last warm-up on the competition platform; it gets the lifter used to the bar and prevents the stereotypical third-attempt-failure that will occur because the lifter opens too heavy. Doing the last warm-up as the first attempt may even be lower than the last successful triple; this is fine because it prevents fatigue. It's fine. The second attempt will split the difference between the first and third attempt. The third attempt will be the same or a little bit above the recent PR (the 85-90% single in the Medium Taper will give the lifter an idea of what to shoot for). The lifter should take into consideration a) how long the meet is (most are 8 hours), b) already maxing out on squat and bench, and c) being more tired than usual (which will definitely be the case). If he traveled a significant distance or had to spend the night in a hotel, then he'll be even more tired than normal. The jumps between first-second and second-third attempts should probably be capped around 20kg (44 lbs) for a new competitor.

Lastly, the lifter should have plenty of water, Gatorade or Pedialyte, and food for the meet. It will be a long day. Whatever time the meet director said they should finish, add at least two hours to that.

Post Meet

After the meet, the lifter should do nothing. The end.

Seriously. I have been a victim of wanting to go back to strenuous work after qualifying for USAW Nationals for Olympic weightlifting, yet my friend Dr. Lon Kilgore convinced me to take a week off and "play". At this point, the lifter probably hasn't had any kind of break in at least three months and had a slight hormonal rebound to do well at the meet. Whether or not he performed well at the meet is irrelevant (although he should have if he read this guide and didn't do anything stupid). "Play" means anything *but* lifting. Go walking, try hiking, throw a Frisbee, play racquetball, or – my personal favorite – frolic on the beach with your dogs while wearing a Speedo. It doesn't matter; take a week off, recharge, and your body and mind will be better prepared to return the gym and get reckless.

Summary

The Texas Method is a strength program for intermediate lifters, and it is perfect for raw powerlifters. There are various tweaks that make the original template more useful like using triples on Intensity Day, practicing pause bench reps, utilizing the RDL, tapers, and benching every week instead of every other week. While these methods enhance the Texas Method, Chapter 3 will introduce many new concepts that will enhance strength progression.

CHAPTER 3 –Modifying the Texas Method

Diligence. That's what the Texas Method demands. It isn't a program that can be effective when intermittently used. It requires consistently wading through Volume and Intensity Days every week to make progress. This chapter will reward that diligence with refreshing modifications that will garner progress and continue to lower the relative volume. These methods have been used successfully on lifters who have been using a TM set up for at least a year, and often 18 months or more. If the reader chooses to implement them before exhausting his efforts with the methods in Part 1 or the last chapter, he may experience slower progress and potentially different results. The idea is to continue the trend of requiring a longer recovery and adaptation period after a dose of stress.

The contents of this chapter are not the only way to do it, but they work very well. These methods have garnered a 300kg (661.38 lbs) raw squat and 320kg (705.47 lbs) raw deadlift in competition. They have moved a stuck 275 bench to a 350 bench. They have increased squats and deadlifts by at least 50 pounds for lifters that thought they had exhausted their intermediate capabilities. And they have filled out musculature in the arms, chests, and backs of even heavier lifters (their legs, of course, have been big for a while). In other words, they garner excellent progress in trainees who are already considered intermediate.

There are two primary changes that help achieve these goals; rotating the Intensity Days and modifying the weekly template. Intermediate lifters are so individualized that one change isn't preferable over the other; it will depend on what the lifter needs to progress. Let's learn what these changes are, why someone would implement them, and when they would apply them.

Brent cleaning and jerking 295 lbs.

Intensity Day Rotations

Changing strength programs is most efficient when slight modifications are made. Linear progressions will increase strength very quickly in almost a linear fashion. After several resets on all of the lifts, the trainee may shift into a basic Texas Method plan – a program that has the same frequency of training in the week and utilizes the same lifts, yet with slightly different set and rep schemes. As a trainee progresses, his TM will progress subtly by tweaking variables using the techniques detailed in the first TM book. If the trainee is diligent, then he should make consistent progress for at least six months, but usually around twelve. He should have identified helpful assistance exercises and reduced the relative volume.

Part 1 covered an array of rep schemes that are possible to use on Intensity Day to garner progress over time. The general trend of using fives, triples, doubles, and singles can be repeated in a macro sense for at least six months in itself. However, stalls will eventually occur. How soon they occur will depend on whether the athlete has an appropriate lifestyle, commitment to program, emphasis on recovery, has a good diet, and adds in helpful supplements. Let's ignore the ancillary reasons for stalling and deal solely with the programmatic issue of not being able to make increases with the standard Intensity Day repetition schemes that have already been attempted. In this case, the trainee can introduce an Intensity Day rotation.

This doesn't merely imply a rotation with different maximal effort reps, but instead alternating heavy days with speed days (speed workouts are typically used on squat or deadlift where the lifter will perform reps on the minute with 55 to 65% of 1RM – they will be discussed in detail below). This has a much different effect than merely rotating maximal effort rep schemes on ID since the accumulated weekly fatigue would compound on itself over several weeks to burn the trainee out. Chapter 1 and Part 1 discussed this; too much volume every week will put the trainee in a recovery deficit every week. Four or more deficit weeks in a row increases the recovery debt until something gives: the trainee fails on ID, or, more seriously, his structures fail during lifting.

Intensity Day Rotations Example Template				
	Volume Day	**Assistance Day**	**Light Day**	**Intensity Day**
Week A	Same	Same	Same	**Heavy**
Week B	Same	Same	Same	**Speed**

Figure 3.1

Rotating in speed days accomplishes several things. First, it provides a break from the high intensity lifting since the ID is close to absolute rep max (it gets harder to set a three rep max when it is done weekly for half a year). Trainees who have been on a TM for at least a year will be approaching the

threshold for how much high intensity work they can sustain in consecutive weeks despite keeping their relative volume low. When alternating in speed days, the time between maximal effort Intensity workouts is 14 days, much more time than the normal seven days. Second, it provides a different, yet effective stress in doing speed reps. Speed reps use lighter weight, yet are performed as *fast as possible* while on limited rest. The adaptive stress is due to high velocity instead of high intensity. The demand of maximal speed helps increase the neuromuscular efficiency by recruiting as many motor units as possible and the limited rest acts as the stress that demands this maximal recruitment when fatigued. In other words, it works on being powerful and maintaining that capability when not fully recovered. Third, by altering the emphasis of the performed lift (squat or deadlift), it allows a week of solid recovery before hitting that particular lift hard and heavy. It partitions the lifts from each other so that the lifter is fresher for each one.

The heavy squat day should consist of sets of three or fewer reps, and the total amount of reps should be capped at ten. Triples work better than fives for the same reasons given in Chapter 2 – they allow for more weight with lower volume and lower time under tension. First aim to progress one or two sets of triples; the sets can be ascending, descending, or across, but ascending sets work well with powerlifting. Multiple doubles work very well, and the specific method of using three ascending doubles is described in detail later in this chapter. Lifters should aim to lift an average of four to six reps over 90% of a current 1RM. There is more leeway with programming the heavy set/rep scheme with squats than deadlifts because squat reps don't stress the system as much as deadlift reps. Heavy deadlift workouts will typically consist of a top set of two or three reps with a possible back-off set. Specific set/rep schemes are discussed later in this chapter.

Squat Intensity Day Set/Rep Schemes		
Reps In A Set	**Range Of # Of Sets**	**Best # Of Sets**
2	2 to 4	3
32 to 32		

Figure 3.2. The range and optimal set/rep scheme for the Squat ID when using Intensity Day Rotations

Before discussing how to compose a template using the Intensity Day Rotations, let's review speed squatting and deadlifting.

Speed Squats

Speed squatting (AKA dynamic effort squatting) as used in this example consists of squatting a fast double on the minute for ten minutes. It differs greatly from Louie Simmons' Westside Method in that the squats are done without extra gear (boxes, bands, chains, etc.). They shouldn't be done consecutively in lieu of heavy days since the lifter would lose the adaptation of lifting heavier. Instead,

they are used to allow ample recovery before the next heavy squat day but also to impart a unique stress on the neuromuscular system.

Speed squatting is an incredible tool to develop or improve the bounce out of the bottom of the rep. Low bar and efficient powerlifting styles of squatting are dependent on a fast stretch reflex in the posterior chain out of the bottom of a squat. This is summed up as the bounce, and is something that can be verbally cued with technically sound squatters to increase the speed of the stretch reflex. However, some lifters are slow out of the bottom and benefit from specific work to improve the bounce. Lifters that do have a good bounce can always improve; they can never be fast enough. Speed squatting is all about bouncing – so much that some form degradation is acceptable in order to over emphasize the bounce. It is acceptable if the squat is not 100% technically correct as long as it results in a quality bounce. This doesn't mean that the back angle can dip forward coming out of the hole (resulting from bad technique, bad coaching, or a lack of hamstring strength and musculature), but the body doesn't have to be as tight with 55% of max as it does with 99% of max.

The lifter should aim to ascend from the bottom of the squat *as fast as possible.* They are trying to make the bounce *the fastest movement they can possibly generate.* Each rep needs to have a concerted effort to make the bounce *as fast and powerful as possible.* This isn't a programming technique for a lazy lifter; absolute maximal amount of effort must be used to *rip the hell out of the rep.* Understand that each rep of each set needs to be uncomfortably, absurdly, and devastatingly fast. It is even beneficial to give a loud grunt when hitting the bounce. Martial artists will use a kiai, a forceful shout at the instantaneous moment their strike makes contact. This exertion increases the intra-abdominal and thoracic pressure to provide better stability and subsequently force transfer. A lifter can use the same technique when exploding out of the hole in a squat. Lifters should use 55% of 1RM (or a conservatively estimated 1RM) for six to eight doubles in their first speed squat workout. The routine for each set will be to use a clock or watch, walk the weight out, get set quickly, and bounce the hell out of two reps. The descent shouldn't be overly fast, but the bounce and subsequent drive need to have maximal effort. The goal is a fast turnaround, not "who can dive bomb the fastest." Think "control down, explode up."

The weight used on speed squats will not be progressed every speed workout. In order to qualify for more weight, the lifter and a coach, friend, or knowledgeable spectator must agree that *every single rep was performed as fast as possible.* If that qualification isn't met during the workout, then keep the weight the same for the next speed workout. Remember, the amount of weight is completely irrelevant; instead, the speed in which it is moved is. The weight will probably stay the same for at least four speed workouts. The lifter will work up from the initial six to eight doubles to the full ten sets over the first couple speed sessions.

Ideally the speed work will be done first in a workout since the body's ability to display power will diminish when the muscles are fatigued from prior stress. On days that include both speed squats and heavy deadlifts, the speed squats should be done first.

Speed Deadlifts

Speed deadlifting is very similar to speed squatting, but will consist of one rep on the minute for ten minutes. The emphasis is still on speed, but the starting position shouldn't degrade. The spine – especially the lumbar – should not be pulled into flexion, especially with half of a 1RM. If the lifter is having trouble maintaining the starting position, then he can control the initial pull off the floor, and then rip the second part of the pull through the lockout (i.e. "control below the knees," then "speed after the knees"). For a lifter who cannot control his starting position, the quick and forceful extension of the hamstrings is the goal as opposed to the speed off the floor (that can be addressed later).

The first workout will consist of 55% of 1RM (or a conservative 1RM estimate) and six to eight reps. The following workout will move to ten reps. From that point onward, weight will only be progressed when the lifter and a coach, friend, or knowledgeable spectator both agree that all ten reps were performed *as fast as possible.* Templates later in the chapter will call for speed deadlifting on the same day as heavy squats; do the squats before the speed deadlifts. It will slightly diminish the speed deadlift potential, but it avoids fatiguing the lifter for the squat session.

Programming Rotations in the Standard TM Template

The method of rotating the Intensity Day is primarily used on the squat and deadlift. The regular TM template has the weekly emphasis alternating from press to bench for a general strength trainee. This is often not a high enough frequency to garner results in more experienced TM users, and Chapter 2 discussed how powerlifters could increase the frequency of their benching. General strength trainees should also change to benching every week; the topic will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Deadlift Rotations

Deadlift Rotation On Standard TM Template

Week	Volume Day	Light Day	Intensity Day
A	Squat 3x5	Squat Light	Squat Heavy
	Bench 3x5	Press 3x5	Bench Heavy
	RDL 3x5		**Deadlift Heavy**
B	Squat 3x5	Squat Light	Squat Heavy
	Bench 3x5	Press 3x5	Bench Heavy
	RDL 3x5		**Deadlift Speed**

Figure 3.3. An example of deadlift rotation while the squat continues to increase weekly.

Rotating the deadlift session will probably start sooner than the squat because the deadlift typically stalls first on the TM. The lifter may have already used speed deadlifts earlier in their template, albeit early in the week while still lifting heavy on the ID. This method of increasing the deadlift for an early stage intermediate lifter is explained in detail in Part 1 (other methods are included as well).

There are programming methods circulating that utilize other types of lifts to improve the deadlift rather than having a lifter deadlift a full rep off of the floor. For powerlifters or intermediate lifters, these methods don't work as well as being able to deadlift regularly. By using a deadlift rotation of a heavy workout and a speed workout, the lifter can deadlift a full rep off of the floor four times a month as opposed to zero to two times (depending on which less productive method is used). This is important for drilling technique, but more so because any time I've had lifters who didn't pull a full rep off the floor, their technique suffered and they weren't confident heading into a meet. Besides, pulling a full range of motion deadlift more frequently is more specific than piecemeal variations.

This rotation can be seamlessly applied without a transition. Let's say a lifter is pulling a weekly triple on his ID and has been progressing it well. Finally, he gets to a weight that is difficult and either barely makes his triple or misses a rep. The following week he can begin speed deadlifting by using the instructions above. Pretty simple; starting the rotation is a small, but significant change. *Subtle changes in a program are preferable over large-scale changes to garner consistent progress over time.* Making small tweaks in this manner can even be referred to as being "organic" in nature, as the program adapts along with the lifter over time. The heavy deadlift workout can be increased by five or ten pounds so long as the reps are successful (i.e. the lifter should be confident he can make a ten pound jump instead of making an ego-fueled decision).

The lifter in this scenario should add RDLs to his program if he hasn't done so already. Their benefits were highlighted in Chapter 2, yet I consider their inclusion to be imperative to quality progress on the deadlift for any lifter. If the lifter deadlifts in a way that reduces tension on the hamstrings and relies on the quads to extend the knees and the lumbar spine to unroll into lockout, it can be an injurious endeavor and would only be improved by weekly RDLs. Remember that they are best included at the opposite end of the week from deadlifts – in this case on Volume or Assistance Day (placing them on Assistance Day works best). RDLs will also augment squatting strength as well.

Squat Rotations

Squat Rotation On Standard TM Template			
Week	**Volume Day**	**Light Day**	**Intensity Day**
A	Squat 3x5 Bench 3x5 RDL 3x5	Squat Light Press 3x5	**Squat Heavy** Bench Heavy Deadlift Heavy
B	Squat 3x5Squat Light**Squat Speed** Bench 3x5Press 3x5Bench Heavy RDL 3x5Deadlift Heavy		

Figure 3.4. An example of squat rotation while the deadlift continues to increase weekly.

The squat progression should exhaust triples on ID before switching to a speed rotation. There's no reason to switch to this rotation before then since alternating heavy days with speed days will garner slower progress than the weekly progression. The transition occurs in the same way as the deadlift: if a triple is unbearably heavy and all aspects of recovery have been accounted for, then the trainee can start speed squatting in the following week. Typically the deadlift will transition to the speed rotation before the squat will, but sometimes the squat will transition first. If the squat stalls due to too much volume or bad mechanics, then those should be rectified before moving to ID rotations.

Trainees should expect to be oddly sore after the first speed workout; placing an emphasis on a fast bounce will provide a new stress on the groin and posterior chain. Each heavy day should increase by five or ten pounds while the speed squats will only progress if each rep is as fast as possible.

Squat and Deadlift Rotations Together

When both lifts are shifted into a speed rotation, then the same heavy or speed days shouldn't occur on the same Intensity Day. When squat is heavy, deadlift should be speed; when deadlift is heavy, squat should be speed.

Squat and Deadlift Rotation On Standard TM Template			
Week	**Volume Day**	**Light Day**	**Intensity Day**
A	Squat 3x5 Bench 3x5 RDL 3x5	Squat light Press 3x5	**Squat Heavy** Bench Heavy **Deadlift Speed**
B	Squat 3x5 Bench 3x5 RDL 3x5	Squat light Press 3x5	**Squat Speed** Bench Heavy **Deadlift Heavy**

Figure 3.5. An example of squat and deadlift rotation used adjunctly.

This will distribute the stress of lifting heavy appropriately and ensure that the squat and deadlifts each get an optimal training session. This is a major change in the TM as training sessions before this point place heavy squats and deadlifts in the same session. This is also why trainees shouldn't shift into speed rotations prematurely; squatting and deadlifting heavy on the same day induces a nice neuroendocrine response and work load that helps new intermediates and young powerlifters. Once the trainee is adapted to the higher work load, they will benefit from the reduction in work even more. It is the same concept presented in Chapter 1; lowering the relative volume acts as a stress in itself, and the same thing happens when the squat or deadlift shifts to a speed workout from a heavy workout. *The trainee's adaptation to the previous program will dictate how they react to the current program.*

Even though the lifter may have been approaching the limit of his 3RMs in the squat or deadlift, he will now be able to continue progress because he isn't accumulating a recovery debt (from consecutive weeks of not recovering fully), he has a two week period between heavy squats or deadlifts, and he is now building an improvement in neuromuscular efficiency from the speed sets to apply into the heavy sets. It is a win-win-win.

It is important to note how the Volume Day's impact changes when using speed rotations. Volume Day is no longer the primary stressor that causes an improvement in strength. Instead, it serves as a medium squat day that maintains the lifter's adaptation to a set amount of volume, provides a stress to the musculature to maintain or improve its size and strength, and provides a dose of medium stress so that the heavy stress day – in the form of speed or intensity – is able to do its job. Volume Day is still relevant, yet its importance ebbs slightly. This means it is okay to drop the overall tonnage, but not to drop the intensity. In other words, keep the top-end set at a similar weight, but use ascending sets to lower the volume. Also, since the volume isn't a primary stressor, it doesn't need to increase as often.

My friend Chris, who has squatted 300kg (661.38 lbs) in competition, kept his Volume Day the same for months at a time before needing to increase it. He was using three sets of five with 15 pound jumps between sets, and when he increased the volume we merely increased each set by 15 pounds.

Chris's Volume Day	
Set	**Weight x Reps**
1	515x5
2	530x5
3	545x5

Figure 3.6

During his time using that volume, Chris squatted 620x2, which puts his VD (with an average weight of 530) at about 85% of his Intensity Day work. *Remember that the VD works best when it is contained around 85% of the ID.* The Intensity Day Rotations are the primary stressor as opposed to the VD.

Speed rotations work very well to continue developing squats and deadlifts, yet, as with any programming technique, it will eventually stall out. However, before we talk about the advanced rotations, let's discuss some template changes that can prolong a lifter's progression.

Split Template

In the evolution of development of programming the TM, we created and implemented the Assistance Day after Volume Day. Light Day remained, yet it only served a purpose of hitting some very light sets in preparation of Intensity Day. The Intensity Day is clearly the money maker on a TM, and doing something on Light Day that may interfere with ID would ruin the short and long term effectiveness of the program. It is typical to see too much volume on Volume Day, so we developed the technique of maintaining or decreasing VD while consistently increasing the ID. I even completely removed Light Day several times when traveling to do seminars in 2009. It got to the point where Light Day was more or less pointless, so to hell with it.

If we were going to train four days a week and one of them – the Light Day – was pointless, then we may as well distribute the work load more evenly across the week. This idea gave birth to the Split Template.

The Split Template	
Monday	Volume Bench And Upper Body Accessory Work
Tuesday	Volume Squats And Pulls
Thursday	Intensity Bench And Upper Body Accessory Work
Friday	Intensity Squats And Pulls

Figure 3.7

This template provided a fresh change of pace to lifters who had trudged through the TM in the era before we made a concerted effort to drop the volume. The shift in distribution immediately made it possible to hit better numbers in the major lifts because we were fresh. The Monday workout has the lifter benching or pressing completely rested – a welcome first for most linear progression and TM veterans! It is certainly possible to bench first on a standard Volume Day, but having an entire day devoted to benching and assistance exercises to build it will just *feel* better mentally at this point of a lifter's career. It is the same with the squat and pulling sessions: knowing that the hard part is over after squats is refreshing. The upper body assistance will be programmed uniquely to attack the lifter's weaknesses. Most guys will also generally have more fun on this template.

The Tuesday workout will consist of the volume squat and some assistance pulling work. Wednesday is a rest day, and Thursday is the intensity bench session with fewer assistance items to keep the volume lower (because it is the upper body's Intensity Day). Friday will be the intensity session for squat and deadlift. It is easy to see how nicely the Intensity Day Rotations fit into this program; one week would have a heavy squat session while the following week would have a heavy deadlift session (see Figure 3.8). It is also possible to put this intensity squat or deadlift session on Saturday; it often works better compared to a Friday where the lifter has to go to work or school all day before training. In fact, all of the lifters I coach on this template prefer hitting their hardest and heaviest training day on Saturday.

Squat And Deadlift Rotation On TM Split Template				
Week	**Upper Volume**	**Lower Volume**	**Upper Intensity**	**Lower Intensity**
A	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Wtd Pull-Ups 3x5	Squat 3x5 RDL 3x5 BB Rows 3x5	Bench 3RM Push-Press 4x2	**Squat Heavy** **Deadlift Speed** Round Back Ext
B	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Wtd Pull-Ups 3x5	Squat Light RDL 3x5 BB Rows 3x5	Bench 3RM Push-Press 4x2 Round Back Ext	**Squat Speed** **Deadlift Heavy**

Figure 3.8. This primarily shows the squat/deadlift rotation on the Intensity Day, yet also gives an example of how the rest of the Split Template can be arranged.

The days are placed in their specific order for a reason; if the squat/pull day occurred the day before the benching/upper body day, then the fatigued larger muscles would inhibit the presses. The pressing exercises train less musculature and thus won't interfere with squatting or pulling on the next day.

This template works really well in the Off Season of a powerlifting focus. As a powerlifter advances, squatting and deadlifting heavy in the same training session will be tiresome and blunt progress. Training heavy squats and deadlifts in different weeks, will yield more progress. Yet a powerlifter needs to be adapted to deadlifting heavy after squatting heavy for meets, so they should shift into a standard TM template one month out from the meet during the Meet Prep phase.

Programming the Bench or Press

In Chapter 2, the "lack of benching" issue was brought up and discussed. However, this could also be a "lack of pressing" issue. Either way, performing both lifts every week will be more effective than performing them every other week. Pressing helps train the entire shoulder girdle and rotator cuff, especially the external rotators – an area that powerlifters commonly injure. It also improves balance and stabilization in the trunk, specifically the abs. The press is bad-mouthed, even by powerlifting coaches, because it is often assumed to be injurious to the shoulders, but impingement issues can be alleviated by upwardly rotating the scapula at the finish of the movement (a slight shrug). For more information on shoulder anatomy and why the overhead press is safe, read this article. My powerlifters experience shoulder discomfort and pain when they abstain from pressing when getting ready for a meet, yet feel great when they are regularly pressing. Whether powerlifting or just trying to get stronger, the press is an excellent strength exercise and imperative for shoulder health.

Including Both Press and Bench

Enough about the why, let's talk about how to include both movements. This section is for the lifter who just wants to get both the press and the bench strong. It also assumes they have decent musculature; if there is a lack of development in the upper body, then addressing that issue will help improve the bench and press the most (the first Texas Method book includes methods to address musculature deficiencies).

General Strength Option	
1st Session	**2nd Session**
Bench Close-Grip Bench	Press Wtd Dips

Figure 3.9

By benching one day and pressing the other day, it would obviously eliminate the entire Volume/Intensity relationship with the presses, but will increase their frequency (compared to alternating their emphasis weekly). In the later intermediate stages of the presses, there are three things that seem to improve the bench and press the most: assistance exercises, higher frequency, and higher intensity. A divergence from the volume/intensity fluctuation isn't a big deal since it matters less with general strength training. Conversely, powerlifters will need to maintain some kind of volume/intensity relationship with their bench.

AC presses 245x2.

The lifter will be most fresh for the lift that's done in the first session since it is the first training session of the week. The days in Figure 3.9 can be reversed if the trainee is worried about the bench interfering with a quality press session later in the week. It will depend on lifter preference, but there are two full days of rest between the training sessions so it may not matter.

Close-grip bench is the first bench-related assistance to try to augment the bench. It is better than incline bench because it greatly stresses the triceps – an area that is often a weak point for locking out the bench – while encouraging a good, externally rotated shoulder. In contrast, the incline bench inherently has a significant degree of internal rotation in the movement which not only teaches bad

habits, but distributes the forces in an injurious way (review Chapter 2 for more). Since close-grip benching trains the triceps well it also will augment the press.

Weighted dips are included on press day because they also effectively train the triceps, anterior shoulder, and pectorals (the same muscles that are used in benching). When discussing weighted dips, I like to cite the example of Pat Casey, the first man to bench 600 pounds. In an old IronMind issue, there was a picture of him dipping with an additional 300 pounds while weighing 300 pounds – it is easy to see how that could equate to a 600 pound bench. Note that some trainees with bad shoulders may need to avoid this exercise. A good cue is "elbows to ribs" to keep the elbows from flaring (i.e. "internally rotating") as well as to apply force through the heel of the palm instead of the hand (the thumb remains wrapped). Lastly, keeping the chest up (i.e. thoracic extension) will ensure the pectorals are recruited properly.

I have had success with programming rep ranges that alternate every week. In the first week, the main lifts will be done for three sets of five while the second week will have three sets of three. Since three sets of five should already have been progressed fully (in a linear progression or on a Volume Day in the original TM template), ascending sets should be used. Increments of seven or ten pounds between sets works better than five pound increments because the first couple of sets will be a lower percentage of 1RM and subsequently less fatiguing for the third set. Anything more than ten pound jumps would be too large of a margin for these lifts. Fifteen pound increases may seem small for squats or deadlifts, yet fifteen pounds is a much higher percentage of a trainee's press max than it is of his deadlift.

Weekly Rep Scheme Alternate		
Week	**Upper Volume**	**Upper Intensity**
A	Bench 3x5 Close-Grip Bench 3x5	Press 3x5 Wtd Dips 3x5
B	Bench 3x3Press 3x3 Close-Grip Bench 3x3Wtd Dips 3x3	

Figure 3.10. Each lift is done with ascending sets of 10 lb jumps.

An additional option could be that every fifth or seventh week the lifter could "single or double on up" with the lifts instead of doing fives or triples. These ascending singles or doubles would give them some higher intensity work to improve the neurological adaptation of heavier weight and possibly display newfound strength in PR's. The aim should be on smaller, consistent jumps instead of biting off more than can be chewed. The goal on these heavier days is to get three to six reps at a heavier weight than the best triples – similar to how normal Intensity Days are structured. This weekly repetition alternate vaguely resembles a 5/3/1 approach to training.

Note that the close-grip bench and weighted dips are not the only assistance exercises that would help the press and bench, but they are the first to include if they aren't used yet. Heavy pulling movements, like rows and pull-ups, are even better at developing the press and bench, and they will be discussed in the Assistance Exercises section below.

Pressing Emphasis

Pressing a lot of weight is impressive. It is not common to see someone easily power clean 225 pounds, and then strict press it overhead. The first thing to try when programming specifically for a big press is a volume/intensity set up.

Press Emphasis A	
Upper Volume	**Upper Intensity**
Volume Press Close-Grip Bench	Intensity Press Wtd Dips Triples

Figure 3.11

This uses the two assistances exercises that we know can help the press (close-grip bench and weighted dips), and puts a premium on pressing every week. Triples are used on weighted dips to keep the overall volume low – aim for about three heavy triples after warming up. Another option is to put the weighted dips on Monday, and add some push press doubles after the intensity pressing.

Press Emphasis B	
Upper Volume	**Upper Intensity**
Volume Press Close-Grip Bench Wtd Dips	Intensity Press Push Press Doubles

Figure 3.12

This increases the amount of volume early in the week and adds the push-press, an effective overhead strengthener, to the ID. The doubles on push press keep the volume low and ensures that only heavy loads are used. There is no utility in push pressing something that can be pressed; trainees should focus on overloading the muscles with more weight than they're accustomed to.

Yet another method is to do press and dips on Monday and heavy push press and close-grip bench on Thursday. Note that low volume, high intensity close-grip bench will be less effective at building triceps or pectoral size, but will help with the "overload on the triceps and shoulder girdle" concept that exists for heavy push presses.

Press Emphasis C	
Upper Volume	**Upper Intensity**
Volume Press Wtd Dips	Push Press Doubles Close-Grip Bench

Figure 3.13

Notice that these examples will typically have a larger set/rep scheme early in the week to act as the Volume Day. Typically the volume session will have two or three lifts while the intensity session has only two; the number of lifts can also increase the volume in the first session. The volume session will usually have pull-ups or chin-ups, but they shouldn't be done during the intensity session since heavy pulling will occur a day or so later. See the Assistance Exercises section below for more discussion on this topic.

By now the reader should have a good understanding of rep ranges to use on Volume Days, assistance exercises, and Intensity Days. Lifts done with volume will consist of three to five sets of three to six reps. Assistance exercises will consist of three to five sets of five to ten reps. Intensity focused sessions will have fewer than ten reps. More clarification is available in Part 1 and this chapter.

Benching Emphasis

Chapter 2 talked about how benching could occur every week with pressing on the Light Day. In the Split Template, there is no Light Day; yet pressing is still an important and necessary lift. The first set up to try is to throw in press after doing volume bench. After getting adapted to that work load, close-grip bench could be added after the intensity bench session. After getting adapted to that change, weighted dips could be added in after the volume bench and press. This forms a nice progression of increasing the amount of work in the week over time – even if each stage only lasts two weeks – instead of throwing it all in at once.

Progression for Bench Assistance		
	Upper Volume	**Upper Intensity**
Week A	Volume Bench Press	Intensity bench
Week B	Volume Bench Press Volume Bench	Intensity Bench Close-Grip Bench
Week C	Press Wtd Dips	Intensity Bench Close-Grip Bench

Figure 3.14

Note that volume bench will no longer creep into the five sets of five realm; instead it will be three sets of five across or ascending. Since benching occurs twice a week, bringing down the bench volume will help prevent over-stressing the structures, especially since other lifts help accumulate more volume on the musculature. Close-grip bench performed after the intensity bench session should stay in the three to five sets of three to five reps realm in order to keep the volume low.

Just like in our pressing variations, close-grip bench could be used on volume day after volume benching and pressing, yet three pressing exercises with a barbell might get cumbersome. I prefer the previous examples, yet the following could also work.

Alternate Bench Assistance Set Up	
Upper Volume	**Upper Intensity**
Volume BenchIntensity Bench PressWtd Dips Triples Close-Grip Bench	

Figure 3.15. Note that triples help keep the volume low.

Assistance Exercises on the Split Template

The best part about this Split Template is that it allows for more assistance to develop musculature and augment the main lifts. Even if Assistance Day was created in the original TM template, it was limited on the number of exercises that could be used, especially for the upper body. Now, there is ample opportunity for creativity. Keep in mind that the type of assistance exercises used will be specific to the individual and their areas of weakness, whether it is a muscle or strength weakness. Remember to add

assistance work incrementally – make small changes to the program instead of large ones. Let's look at what goes on each day in this template and discuss what assistance exercises work well accordingly.

Volume Bench or Press Day

The previous section on programming the presses outlined how close-grip bench and weighted dips help to develop the main lifts, yet it is important to note that there is an entirely different group of lifts that can also help develop the bench and press. Heavy pulling movements, in the form of rowing and pull-ups, are often the best assistance work for improving the presses and upper body musculature. The vertical pulling movements will be scheduled on the Volume Pressing day while the horizontal pulling will be done on the Volume Squat Day; horizontal pulling, like barbell rows, will fatigue the thoracic spine for squats while pull-ups will not. That's why rows are not placed the day before squatting.

The reader may notice an emphasis on developing good muscular structure, and it is because a balanced lifter is a good all-around lifter. When the upper back is stronger, the area around the shoulder joints is more stable and thus the presses are stronger. Various muscles like the middle traps, the rhomboids, the rear deltoids, and rotator cuff muscles are associated with upper back strength. The most notable muscle is the latissimus dorsi, a large shoulder extensor. The lat is also an internal rotator that maintains a stretched tension when the shoulders are in a proper externally rotated position during the press and bench (for more information, read this post).

Weighted pull-ups can be progressed with three sets of five reps until they stall, after which various rep schemes can be utilized to garner progress. Some examples include three to five sets of three reps with heavier weight, sets of doubles, or rotating a different rep max each week (8RM, 5RM, 3RM, and rotate). If heavy doubles, triples, or repetition maxes are used, the trainee can always drop to either a lighter percentage or body weight for a set of maximal reps. Personally, I had a lot of success when doing a few sets at a heavier weight, then at 50 pounds, then as many reps as I could do at 25 pounds, then as many as I could do at body weight (at the end of a session, I PR'd with 21 reps at a body weight of 212).

Curls or some kind of triceps extensions (like French presses or nose breakers) can be done on this day with a standard assistance rep scheme. They shouldn't be relied on for augmenting the bigger pressing movements, but instead can increase muscular size. While the triceps contribute to the press and bench and biceps can contribute to stabilizing the elbow and shoulder during a bench, there are other compound movements that will better augment the main lifts (e.g. close-grip bench, barbell rows, weighted dips, and weighted pull-ups).

Volume Squat Day

At this point, the squat volume is typically sitting around three sets of five, and if the Intensity Day Rotations have been applied, then the volume will have dropped even more due to using ascending sets. This day can still be considered a volume squat day because of the inclusion of the assistance exercises.

RDLs should be done after squats because they work the proximal hamstrings. Heavy barbell rows are a good assistance exercise to add in after the RDLs; they will develop the upper back, shoulder extensors, and elbow flexors. I started using them more in programming when I talked with a lifter named Ray at Quest Gym in Duluth, GA. He is coached by Sherman Ledford, who has coached many IPF World Champion and World Record holders. After I watched Ray bench 405 for a pretty simple raw triple (at 24 years old and weighing a very lean 232 pounds), he explained how heavy rowing movements are useful for developing stability in the bench press.

The upper back is important in all of the major lifts, including the squat, deadlift, bench, and press. It is also vital in the front squat, snatch (pull and overhead position), clean, and jerk stabilization. It also is the marker of being a real lifter instead of a silly "gym goer" since trap and upper back thickness is neglected in the mirror-training populations. Proper barbell rows are referred to as "Pendlay Rows" online, and each rep starts and stops on the floor. This mainly allows the lifter to get some momentum at the beginning of the rep so that it can be rowed to the upper abdomen area. When the legs apply momentum at the start of the lift, it allows much heavier weight to be used than a conventional "hold the bar in your hands during the whole set" row (these are often called "Yates Rows" online, named after Dorian Yates). By having momentum in the beginning of the rep, the lifter can avoid any excessive "English" from occurring at the top range of motion; the spasmodic movement that drops the chest lower to complete a row does not work the back muscles effectively. Lifter should generate momentum off the floor with the legs, but avoid dropping the chest as the bar is rowed into the abdomen for maximum efficacy. It is said that Ed Coan would regularly do this style of rowing with well over 500 pounds. Coan's best deadlift was 901 pounds, and he set over 70 World Records in powerlifting and won World Championships in four different weight classes.

Chris rows 340x5.

Dumbbell rows could be used as well, yet since most gyms don't have dumbbells over 150 pounds (and in some cases smaller), there is more overload possible using the barbell variation. The hamstrings, hips, and lumbar muscles also get a bit of stress since they must maintain positioning as each rep is pulled off of the floor, and dumbbell rows don't have this benefit of additional musculature.

Intensity Bench or Press Day

The primary lift of the day will be done first with some kind of ancillary pressing movement that is done with a similar "lower volume, heavier weight" set up. A review of the earlier bench and press sections will show that the overall volume of the day should be kept lower than the volume bench day, even on weighted dips or close-grip bench if they are included. It is likely that the pressing assistance exercises will be the only assistance work performed; pulling assistance exercises should be left out if heavy deadlifts are scheduled in the next few days. Exercises like pull-ups, chin-ups, rows, DB rows, etc. should be avoided so that the shoulder extensors are not fatigued for deadlift or rack pulls. Pulling assistance *can* be included if the next training session consists of a heavy squat and speed deadlift rotation; the lighter deadlifting won't be negatively affected by the pulling assistance. If the lifter did pull-ups on the Volume Pressing day, then they can do chin-ups on this Intensity Press day.

To review, pulling assistance would only be performed on this day if the Intensity Squat/Deadlift day did not consist of heavy deadlifting. Otherwise, the pulling assistance could be debilitating to a heavy deadlift workout. It is best to avoid barbell rows as they will tire the thoracic musculature for heavy squatting and/or deadlifting; instead, do barbell rows on the Volume Squat Day.

Intensity Squat/Deadlift Day

Depending on the scheduled week, this could either consist of a heavy squat and speed deadlift *or* a speed squat and heavy deadlift. Notice that the template places this day on either Friday or Saturday in a normally structured week. If it is done on Friday, then it only allows two days in between lower body training days (with volume on Tuesday and intensity on Friday). Placing the Intensity Squat/Deadlift Day on Saturday allows for an additional day of recovery, has a complete recovery day preceding it, and puts the session on Saturday instead of Friday. Most trainees will have full time responsibilities – like school or work – that drain them by the end of the week. Lifting on Saturday allows more rest and prevents a training session after a normal shift of work. Sometimes this can also result in better food intake prior to the training session. My friend Mike and Chris will have hearty dinners on Friday night and then a large breakfast with eggs and pancakes on Saturday morning before their Intensity Squat/Deadlift Day.

Some assistance can be used on this day, but the trainee should keep the overall volume low on this day to maintain the lower volume and higher intensity relationship inherent in the second half of the week. If weighted pull-ups were not performed on the Intensity Bench/Press Day, then they could be done

here. Relatively lighter lower back or posterior chain exercises work really well on this day, like banded good mornings, reverse hyper-extensions, or round back extensions.

I got the idea to use banded good mornings from my friend Shannon Green in NSW, Australia. A band is attached to the bottom of a rack and the lifter stands two to three feet away from the attachment with the band at the base of their neck. They then push their hips back to emulate normal good morning or RDL mechanics. Once there is a stretch on the hamstrings (usually at about a 45 degree back angle, with respect to the ground), they drive through the band quickly to the starting position. They can be used for three to five sets of ten to twenty reps, depending on the goal or thickness of the band.

Banded Good Mornings as taught by Shannon Green.

Reverse hyper-extensions were developed by Louie Simmons and apply an easy stretch on the lumbar spine followed by a contraction of the lumbar and hip extensor muscles. They are highly effective at getting some helpful contractions in these areas without providing too much stress. The movement was developed by Simmons to heal a back injury, but it can be used for muscle developing purposes as well.

Reverse Hyper movement performed on a Glute-Ham Bench.

Round back extensions are an excellent exercise. I first got the idea to program round back extensions after Glenn Pendlay put up a video of them on the California Strength website. They imitate a standard back extension, yet with flexed knees so that hip extension is removed from the movement. Instead, the trunk is flexed and extended with a load on the upper back musculature (just like in a high bar squat or good morning). This is very effective at getting good work in the lumbar extensors. I have reports – both personally and from 70's Big readers – that this exercise has significantly helped the quality of their deadlift. This exercise would augment the strength and musculature necessary for any kind of pulling (snatches, cleans, deadlifts, etc.).

I prefer banded good mornings or round back extensions as an assistance exercise on this day merely because reverse hyper machines are not commonly available in most gyms. The combination of RDLs early in the week, working heavy squats and pulls, and using banded good mornings, reverse hypers, or round back extensions will help create solid and strong hip musculature.

Assistance for Lagging Lifts

Despite the utility of many assistance exercises, it is unwise to try to use all of them at once. Assistance work should be added to a program gradually and primarily focus on muscular and strength weaknesses. RDLs and either banded good mornings or round back extensions are staples to the program since most trainees have weaker posterior chains; these will be placed on the first and second lower body days respectively. Note that the RDLs are always placed on the opposite end of the week from deadlifts; doing them any closer to the pulling would be debilitating for quality deadlift workouts. Weighted pull-ups – or even improving regular body weight pull-ups – will have a significant impact on upper body strength for early to mid-level intermediates; use them at least once a week. In the standard set up, there is a horizontal and vertical pulling movement early in the week while the end of the week will only

have one. Remember that the end of the week should have less total work, yet that work will be relatively heavier.

Before looking to assistance exercises to help a lagging lift, lifters should first ensure that the main lift is being performed with optimal mechanical efficiency. If inefficiency is present, they need to find out what can improve it. Is there a lack of musculature or strength? If so, then an assistance exercise from this chapter can be used that coincides with that area of the body. Is there a technical issue? By identifying the problem, hiring a coach, and/or utilizing a reduction in weight for the sake of technique practice, the lifter can address the fault. Reductions can also occur in the form of lighter drop sets after heavier work is done in order to refine technique. Is there a mobility limitation that prevents proper muscular recruitment or optimal position? It is the lifter's responsibility to learn their limitation and address it daily; most lifters drastically need to improve their mobility. Assistance exercises are great, but they are not the only answer. Make sure these other issues are not present before relying on assistance work to solve a weakness.

As an example, the first thing to use for improving a weak bench lockout would be close-grip bench. Pressing will improve with consistent usage in a program and proper mechanics, but can be improved by adding in weighted dips and close-grip bench. Remember that mechanics play a huge role in the upper body exercises, and a lack in muscular development can prevent proper mechanics from being used. For example, if the trainee has internally rotated on the bench and press over time, his triceps and external shoulder rotators will not have developed properly. Thus it will be difficult for him to assume a proper externally rotated position and his triceps will be unable to bear the load properly. In this case, the trainee would have to drop weight and garner work with lighter loads, but could use assistance exercises – in this case the weighted dip – to develop the triceps musculature that will help perform proper mechanics. The dips will need to be performed with good external rotation as well.

The same concept applies to the hamstrings in the squat and deadlift. Including the RDL helps account for potential hamstring weaknesses; even strong lifters can have hamstring issues. AC, a strong young powerlifter, deadlifted 562 in competition yet had a subtle forward knee movement as the bar passed his knees; his body shifted into a position to finish the lift because the hamstrings were not strong enough to maintain their tension and contract to extend the hips. After using RDLs and rack pulls (to be discussed later), this slight mechanical error no longer occurs and he has deadlifted 590 in training.

It leaves the scope of this book to identify and treat all of the issues that prevent each lift from advancing, but the basic tenet is to ensure technical efficiency, identify the weak point of the lift, and utilize assistance work to improve that musculature or part of the range of motion.

Other Repetition Schemes

All of the rep schemes discussed thus far focus on improving strength. Muscle is built with increases in strength, but this quality will slow with mid-level intermediates. The assistance exercises can help garner muscular development, especially weighted pull-ups, barbell rows, and RDLs. Yet some trainees may opt

for higher rep schemes to fill their upper body out (the lower body is usually significantly developed). I have had AC, Chris, and Mike utilize a three-sets-of-ten rep scheme in their upper body movements for four to six weeks at a time to add upper body mass. All of them experienced noticeable hypertrophy. AC had excellent strength gains by using three sets of ten on Volume Bench Day and a 5RM on Volume Intensity Day; he eventually bench pressed 375x5. Chris didn't experience significant strength increases, yet Mike had marginal increases. Mike's limbs are very long, and the additional work helped him pack on some mass and gave him more bench tonnage to continuously increase his bench in training and competition.

While higher rep schemes were successful on average, their propensity to yield strength gains is dependent on the trainee's overall bench press progress. Experimentation with ladder rep schemes for volume bench sessions yielded effective strength and size gains. One ladder consists of a single, a double, and a triple done in succession with short periods of rest, amounting to six total reps. Several ladders can be used in succession to garner higher amounts of volume. Since the reps are so low (ranging between one to three reps), heavier weight can be used to accumulate significant volume with higher percentages of 1RM. For example, Mike used five ladders to garner 30 total bench reps. He performed each set on the minute; the fifteen sets take him fifteen minutes. In one workout, he completed 30 reps within fifteen minutes at 250 pounds. This is the same amount of reps and volume as completing three sets of ten reps, but he would have had to use lighter weight since each set had a high rep range of ten reps. *Ladders used in this way allow a trainee to garner the same amount of volume with a greater intensity in a shorter amount of time.*

Rest periods are a variable that typically aren't manipulated for strength training since lifters need to be fresh for each set. Shorter rest periods are often used in training focused on hypertrophy. But in this case the one minute of rest works as an effective variable that results in a good adaptation, while also ensuring that all 15 sets are done in a timely manner. The weight can be progressed up to the limit of what one minute rest allows, and then the trainee could allow for more rest (i.e. resting for 75 seconds instead of 60).

When using ladders for the Volume Bench Day, the Intensity Bench Day consists of three ascending triples. The jumps between sets are typically five to ten pounds. Observe Figure 3.16 below for what one of Mike's weeks looked like. Mike was a fan of the development he received from three sets of ten, yet was even more pleased with how the five ladders (for 30 total reps) on his Volume Bench Day developed strength and size.

Mike's Ladder Set Up	
Volume Bench	**Intensity Bench**
5 Ladders @ 265	305x3
(1,2,3 Reps x 5)	315x3
*Each Set On The Minute	325x3

Figure 3.16

Ladders can also be used to accumulate large amounts of work with lighter loads multiple times a week. Two 70's Big readers have tried this method. I suggested that Jake Briskin try them after seeing his unsavory internal rotation during his bench press at a 70's Big Workshop. He used ladders to accumulate work with light loads in order to work on proper external rotation. Briskin only saw low level strength gains; his previous max of 275x1 improved to 285x1, but required the same effort as the previous max. Patrick Stroup, another reader, tried using them because his bench was unfortunately low. Stroup enjoyed them in his program and gained considerable size, yet he did not see significant strength increases in the four weeks he used them. As of this writing, low intensity ladders should only be used for people in the "novice realm" or lifters who either need accumulated work with the bench or need to improve their external rotation while benching – using low intensity ladders with intermediate lifters probably won't yield impressive results.

To clarify, ladders can be used in two ways: high or low intensity. The former uses heavy weight and performs each set on the minute for strength development once a week (and usually as a Volume Day). The latter uses low intensity and primarily aims to accumulate work with several sessions throughout the week (i.e. two or three times a week). Mike and Chris used the high intensity version while Briskin and Stroup used the latter.

Texas Method Programmatic Evolution Reviewed

What started as a simple Texas Method template has now been modified with several subtle changes to represent a very different program. It helps to review this evolution to understand the flow of change and how to progress.

The TM started with a simple Volume/Light/Intensity Day format. I quickly learned that pushing the 5x5 volume along with the Intensity Day was a recipe for body degradation and failure, so the relative volume was reduced. This reduction in volume serves as a stress in itself to induce progress. After identifying several helpful assistance exercises, Assistance Day was placed in between Volume and Light Day. This basic set up works for quite a while. When progress slows or stalls, the trainee can either use Intensity Day Rotations or change their template into the Split Template. The rotations were presented first in this chapter as they are the more subtle programming change to make, and subtle changes are preferable to drastic changes for program efficacy. Assuming the rotations are used first, then the trainee can later shift into the Split Template with appropriate assistance exercises. The Intensity Day Rotations will work well on either the Standard TM Template or Split Template, yet the Split Template is necessary in later stages of development because it distributes the work load throughout the week and allows for more assistance work.

Texas Method Progression Over Time						
	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**
Standard TM	Volume		Light		Intensity	
Added Assistance Day	Volume	Assistance Day	Light		Intensity	
Intensity Rotation	Volume	Assistance Day	Light		Rotating Intensity Days	
Split Template	Upper Volume	Lower Volume		Upper Intensity		Lower Intensity

Figure 3.17

The Split Template can be modified and used for other programs, including weightlifting programs. The Intensity Day Rotations concept can be used in many other programs, including the "Strength and Conditioning Program" template I have used for years and featured in *FIT.As* long as they are intelligently used within the confines of a trainee's history and progress, these options are doors to progress in other programming templates.

Using the Intensity Day Rotations on the Split Template allows sustained progress, but every program will eventually stall. Chapter 5 will show the tweaks a lifter can use to continue making progress while on the Split Template.

CHAPTER 4 – Advanced TM Modifications

By now the trend is obvious; make subtle changes to garner progress. The evolution of the TM is such that it lowers the pounding on the body and expands the length of time that the stress—recovery—adaptation period occurs. The rotations focus primarily on the squat and deadlift development. Development of the presses is more so due to their weekly inclusion and assistance exercise selection.

Repetition Changes to Squat Rotations

The regular squat rotations alternated heavy and speed continuously. There is detailed support earlier in this chapter for using triples on the heavy days; they consist of few enough reps so that heavier weight can be used with lower time under tension when compared to fives. However, using other rep schemes will be necessary to continue strength increases.

The first progression is to keep using triples, but perform two or three sets instead of just one. The sets can either be ascending or descending, though ascending is preferred. The benefit of descending sets is that the heaviest triple can be done first while the lifter is fresh, but the lifter will experience greater fatigue and need to drop the weight by a greater margin in subsequent sets compared to if he had used ascending sets. Ascending sets will have yield more work at higher percentages. For example, a lifter can squat 515x3, 530x3, and 545x3 in an ascending structure. That same lifter could do 550x3 or 555x3 on his first triple in a descending scheme (it would be his first set). However, he would need to make a significant drop for his second set – probably below 530 – and the result would be a lower tonnage than the ascending scheme.

Ascending triples can be used to garner more high intensity work in squatting. Performing multiple sets is important for having the "endurance" at higher intensities. It is crucial for powerlifters because they need to perform multiple maximal reps in a meet. This is how the next progression was developed.

The second method is to use three ascending doubles; this is the most effective Squat Intensity Day set/rep scheme for a powerlifter using this program. The goal of using ascending sets of anything on heavy squat days is to increase the weight on the final set to push through PR territory. Typically a lifter at this stage of progression will only increase the final set by five pounds every heavy squat session. The lifter will start the ascending doubles with 10 pound jumps between each set and increase all of the sets by five pounds every heavy session (e.g. 600x2, 610x2, and 620x2 would be progressed to 605x2, 615x2, and 625x2 in the next session). This progression will eventually slow, and this is usually identified by having a very difficult final set in the last heavy squat session (or missing a rep entirely). When this occurs, the lifter will schedule the five pound increase *on the final set,* yet will increase each set by 15 pounds instead of ten. This will decrease the overall tonnage, but still hit the higher intensity on the final

double. Once this method slows, the lifter will do the same but with 20 pound jumps. For example, if a lifter barely makes 630x2 on the last set with 15 pound increases, then their next heavy session would use 20 pound increases with the final set at 635x2. Observe figure 3.x.

Example Progression Of 10, 15, 20 Pound Weight Jumps	
10 Pound Jumps	610x2, 620x2, 630x2
15 Pound Jumps	605x2, 620x2, 635x2
20 Pound Jumps	600x2, 620x2, 640x2

Figure 4.1. These figures are similar to what Chris lifted in the first quarter of 2012.

Note that in Figure 4.1's example, there is no progression with each method before switching to the next. Normally, the lifter would have several heavy days of using the 10 pound jumps before requiring the 15 pound jumps. That progression was ignored for the sake of example. Regardless, it is easy to see how the first and second sets decrease in weight as the final set increases. In that specific example, the tonnage every week stays the same, but the intensity on the two preceding sets decreases. In a real world scenario where the lifter has been progressing with 10 pound jumps for at least four sessions, the change to 15 pound jumps will have a profound effect at reducing fatigue prior to the last set.

Doing three doubles with ten, fifteen, or twenty pound jumps between them will emulate a meet and ensure that the lifter is adapted to a work load that demands three high intensity sets done in an ascending fashion. For example, there were two meets in 2011 (USAPL Raw Nationals in Scranton, PA and USAPL Holiday Classic in Carrolton, TX) that Chris lifted in where he missed his third attempt squat. We determined that one problem was that his body was fatigued for the third attempt because he was only performing one maximum double or triple on his heavy squat days. After switching to the "three ascending doubles method", he hit his third attempt of 300kg (661.38) at the 2012 NAPF Raw Challenge at the Arnold Sport Festival. The programming change fixed the problem.

These changes helped Chris squat 661 at the 2012 NAPF Raw Challenge.

It may not be comparable to talk in terms of absolute numbers when discussing weight increases. For example, 10, 15, or 20 pounds for Chris' squat will be a small percentage of his max. However, 15 pounds for a girl who squats around 200 pounds will be much greater. Using numbers from various lifters, I found what percent each weight jump represented. There wasn't much difference between the lifter's actual max or what their heaviest set was in a given session, so if a reader wanted to calculate it, they could just use their heaviest Intensity Day set.

- 10 pound jumps represent weight increases of about 1.5%
- 15 pound jumps represent weight increases of about 2.5%
- 20 pound jumps represent weight increases of about 3.0%

Note that I rounded the 2.5% up from 2.3% – the difference was marginal and the value will be rounded to a usable number anyway. A lifter can multiply their heaviest Intensity Day weight with the percent to find what their weight comparable weight increases would be (remember that 1.5% is multiplied as .015 instead of 1.5). The table below shows the rounded figures with a max squat of 200, 400, and 600 pounds for comparison.

Comparisons Of Weight Jump Percentages For Different Strength Levels			
Max	**% Of Max**	**Exact Weight**	**Rounded To Usable Weight For Workout**
600 pounds	1.5	9	10
	2.5	15	15
	3	18	20
400 pounds	1.5	6	5
	2.5	10	10
	3	12	15
200 Pounds	1.5	3	2 To 5
	2.5	5	5
	3	6	7 To 10

Figure 4.2

A female with a 200 1RM would not use a 20 pound jump in her training. Figure 4.2 shows that a comparable weight increase for her is 7 to 10 pounds. This level of detail merely presents the reader with the reasoning behind a given weight value. Programming by or with percentages is beyond the level of advancement of this book. Instead, lifters should just use the rounded values on the right side of the table. Or, lifters who have a max greater than 400 pounds can use the 10, 15, and 20 pound progression. Lifters with a max less than 400 pounds can half each of those values for a 5, 7, and 10 pound progression.

Using three ascending doubles is an incredibly useful method to implement on the Squat Intensity Days. Powerlifters should definitely use it (since it effectively preps for three attempts in a meet), and regular strength trainees should progress into it. A regular trainee could use the first method above to transition from doing one triple to multiple triples, and then decrease the reps down to doubles once the progress with triples slows. Trainees should keep in mind that it is preferable to adjust the set and rep scheme as progress slows instead of waiting for it to stall completely.

Repetition Changes to the Bench Press for Powerlifting

In the ladder discussion, Mike's Bench Intensity Day was cited as three ascending triples. This marks a transition from completing a single triple on the Bench Intensity Day to multiple sets, and it can be progressed in the same way that the squats were in the previous section.

Completing one triple will allow for significant strength increases by reducing the time under tension and improving recovery, but the same issues arise: powerlifting meets require three near maximal attempts instead of just one. Like most of these programmatic changes, the concept is obvious, but it took both success and failure to realize the program needed modification.

Assuming that the lifter has used one triple on their heavy bench day, they can start to increase the number of triples. They may want to use a short period of two ascending triples followed by a period of three ascending triples – subtly changing and adapting to a program won't be as disruptive. If the "three ascending triples" method's progress slows, then the lifter can drop to doubles. Decreasing the reps obviously decreases the total tonnage of the session, but it will increase the intensity (or amount of weight) that can be used in each session.

Using three ascending doubles is a beautiful method for a powerlifter. It allows them to adapt to three near maximal sets and it gives them a realistic idea of what they can hit at the meet each heavy session. If the lifter is experienced with the skill of paused benching, they can focus their training on "touch-and-go" doubles. If the lifter can double a bench press with touch-and-go, then they most likely can pause it at the meet. Most lifters will be able to get a bit more out of their touch-and-go double when at the meet, but it is a good guideline. In the December of 2011, Chris and Mike didn't pause any of their reps in training and both went 3/3 on bench and made new PR's (in a meet that they didn't taper for).

Progressing the doubles will function in the same way that the squat doubles were progressed in the previous section. The only difference is that the weight increases will be smaller since the bench uses less weight. The program progression would flow from making five pound jumps to ten and fifteen pound jumps (compared to the squat's 10, 15, and 20 pound jumps). As each stage's progression slows, shift to the greater increases. As the meet nears, the lifter should focus on increasing the weight jumps to emulate that of the meet. For example, most lifters will make 10kg (22 lbs) jumps between squat attempts and 7.5kg (~16.5 lbs) or 5kg (~11 lbs) jumps between bench press attempts. Therefore their heavy sets should emulate this right before the meet. Once the training resumes after the meet, the lifter can opt back to smaller jumps and work through the progression again.

Weight Fluctuation

This is another available method to program the squat rotations, and it fluctuates how heavy the Intensity Day actually is. The basic rotation from earlier in the chapter consisted of a simple Heavy/Speed rotation, and this method shifts into Heavy/Speed/Medium/Speed rotation.

Differences In Regular And Advanced Intensity Rotations	
Regular Intensity Rotation	
Week 1	Heavy
Week 2	Speed
Advanced Intensity Rotation	
Week 1	Heavy
Week 2	Speed
Week 3	Medium
Week 4	Speed

Figure 4.3

"Heavy" usually meant doing a maximal effort double (Chris got up to a bone-grinding 625x2) while "Medium" was a triple that may or may not have been maximal. When Chris was squatting his doubles in the low 600s, his non-maximal triples were progressed in a range of 570 to 585 lbs. We used this with Chris through most of 2011 until we found that using three ascending doubles works better (as mentioned in the previous section). This method will work to increase strength, yet it will probably inhibit lifter's adaptation to multiple high intensity sets; something that is necessary for a powerlifter. However, if a trainee wanted to focus his training into other lifts, like the deadlift and bench, this would still make progress with lower amounts of stress on the squat.

This method could also be used with different rep schemes. Doing a 2RM on the "heavy" day and a moderate triple on "medium" day worked well, but it could instead use a 3RM and 5RM. Or 5RM and 10RM. Lifters and coaches can experiment with different methods, but they should try to stay conservative in planning since there are only two heavy squat days a month.

Weight Fluctuation Options		
	"Heavy Day"	**"Medium Day"**
Option 1	2RM	Moderate Triple
Option 2	3RM	5RM
Option 3	5RM	10RM

Figure 4.4

Weight choices are very important in these latter stages. Increases between respective days will be very low, most often five pounds. In these advanced stages of powerlifting and strength training, garnering

five to ten pounds every month on a squat is successful. There were times when Chris missed the second rep on his 2RM, yet they weren't failures since they gave us data points to make decisions in order to continue preparing for powerlifting meets. If the progression on the heavy and medium days is slowing and the volume has been the same for several months, then an increase in volume may be warranted. Assuming a "three sets of five" set up with 15 pound increases between sets, the lifter should increase each set by 15 pounds to result in a 225 lb increase in overall tonnage (75 lbs per set). Lifters should try this subtle increase first to see if it helps push the heavier sets since larger jumps can be detrimental to recovery.

The real utility in this heavy/medium fluctuation is that it can be combined with the repetition changes talked about in the previous section. If the "three ascending doubles" scheme slows, then it can be plugged into this set up. The "heavy" day could consist of three ascending doubles while the "medium" day consists of two descending triples. See Figure 3.x for more. Note that using the "three ascending doubles" method has worked the best, and it can be manipulated to sustain progress for a long period of time if the programmer switches between the varying weight increases to prepare for meets.

More Weight Fluctuation Options		
	"Heavy Day"	**"Medium Day"**
Option 4	Three Ascending Doubles	Two Descending Triples
Option 5	Two Ascending Triples	Two Descending Sets Of Five
Option 6	Five Ascending Singles	Two Descending Triples

Figure 4.5

Advanced Deadlift Rotations

The concept of performing multiple sets will not work very well with deadlifts since multi-set heavy deadlifting will cause too much structural and systemic stress. In Intensity Day Rotations, there is a full week between a heavy squat session and a heavy deadlift session, and vice versa. That is plenty of time to recover from multiple squat sets, but not enough time to recover from multiple sets of deadlift. Avoiding multiple sets on the deadlift is preferable within the context of the entire program. Note that one reason that multiple squat sets are beneficial is because it allowed the lifter to adapt to doing several sets at a high intensity – something that is necessary for powerlifting. However, the lifter also needs to adapt to multiple deadlift attempts, but it has already been stated that doing more deadlift sets will be detrimental. This is where the value in Advanced Deadlift Rotation lies.

Switching to the Advanced Deadlift Rotation is advised under three different scenarios: 1) the lifter has inefficient mechanics due to lumbar or hamstring weakness, 2) the athlete has balanced musculature and strength yet progress is slowing on the heavy/speed deadlift rotation, or 3) heavy deadlifts,

including third attempts in a meet when tired, are missed at the lockout. There is incredible tension on the hamstrings throughout the deadlift: during the start of the lift the hamstrings act isometrically to maintain their tension to hold the back angle in place as the knee extensors push the floor away; as the bar nears the knee, the hamstring's demand increases due to inefficient leverage; the bar passes the knees and the hamstrings shift from maintaining tension to shortening, or concentrically contracting, to extend the hips as the lumbar muscles maintain their extension and hold the pelvis in place.

There is a lot to digest in that paragraph. If the lifter doesn't have a balance of strength and musculature, then their body will shift into a position – by necessity – to complete the lift with the musculature that it is actually strong with. Often the hamstrings are unable to maintain the tension and subsequent position associated with transitioning from "isometric" to "concentric" and this is noticeable by the knees shifting forward, even slightly. If the knees reflex or shift forward, the hamstrings shorten in the same way as if a bow and arrow was ready to fire and the front hand holding the bow moves back towards the hand holding the string and arrow; it reduces the stretch on the string, shortens the distance, and removes the tension. The forward knee transition is usually either associated with a rounding of the lumbar spine or a re-flexion of the knees; either way, it shortens the hamstring and reduces tension. Instead, the load shifts to the quadriceps and the lumbar spine to quad press the weight up and slowly extend the lumbar to lock the lift out.

It isn't uncommon for very heavy deadlifts to be lifted this way. After all, training the hamstrings to maintain large amounts of tension doesn't occur on its own. Many lifters, especially the strong ones, won't consider their posterior chain weak if they have a big deadlift, yet the analysis of the anatomy above points out how the hamstrings are unable to bear the load. A strong deadlifter who has forward knee movement, re-flexion of the knees, or lumbar flexion can only improve his deadlift by training this musculature properly.

By not addressing this issue, third attempt deadlifts at long, tiring meets are very difficult and are often missed. When factoring in all of the previous warm-ups and maximal lifts for squat, bench, and deadlift in a meet, it is easy to see why the lack of an effective posterior chain can result in a missed lockout on a third attempt deadlift. RDL's won't completely fix this weakness, but they can help. The problem with RDL's is that they work primarily in the long term from chronic use instead of having an acute transfer.

RDLs place stress on the hamstrings via a stretch and contraction caused by leverage at the bottom of the ROM, but the tension doesn't replicate that of a maximal deadlift. Instead we need an exercise that places fantastic amounts of tension on the hamstring. We also need it to be more specific to the deadlift. We need the lumbar extensors to work to hold the pelvis in place so that the hamstrings can not only be in their proper position, but to have a stable anchor to contract against. And we need this event to occur under duress and fatigue so that the lumbar extensors and hamstrings can adapt to doing it when tired, much like they are late in a meet. *Enter the Rack Pull.*

Chris's starting position as he rack pulls 675x3.

The rack pull is an exercise where the bar is pulled like a deadlift from pins in a rack that are set at a height higher than a normal deadlift. A barbell could also be pulled from a box so long as the starting position of the bar is the same. For our purposes, the bar will be placed right below the patella of the knee in front of the tibial tuberosity. This is the most mechanically disadvantageous position of the deadlift and will focus on the transition from isometric hamstring action to concentric shortening. If the bar were placed above the knee or at any point on the thigh, the knees can easily shift forward and reduce tension on the hamstring – the whole process that we are trying to avoid. The grip will be the same, or more narrow, than that of the deadlift. The lifter will set up so that his shins are vertical, and take a double overhand grip. The lifter will then squeeze the chest up in order to extend the thoracic and lumbar spine. Three important cues when starting the pull are to a) keep the low back as tight as possible – the goal is to not let it unlock or flex, b) to keep the chest up so that the upper back doesn't round, and c) to keep the bar back so that it doesn't swing forward creating an unsavory lever arm. Chris also finds it beneficial to think "hamstrings" in order to ensure they are the emphasis of tension and the lockout.

When a lifter is new to rack pulling, they probably won't be able to lift as much weight as they can with the conventional deadlift and may lift significantly less. This is not only okay, but likely since the area of focus – the lumbars and hamstrings – are already weak enough that they can't maintain position, so using an exercise that asks them (rather rudely) to do so is the only way to improve their ability to experience the proper forces. Compared to the full range of motion deadlift, the rack pull will typically

have a lower systemic stress, but often can provide significant localized stress at the hamstrings and lumbars (especially when first incorporating them).

Straps should be used with a double overhand grip; the abnormal strain of rack pulling can cause biceps irritation or damage in an arm that is supinated for an alternate grip. Multi-rep sets will begin each rep from a dead stop; touch-and-go sets can be extremely injurious and should only be considered for very advanced lifters.

At first, rack pulls should be used for sets of five. This will provide enough reps with a heavy enough load to work the musculature properly while experiencing fatigue. Think of it as a way to train the musculature to sustain higher amounts of work and duress. The single heavy set of five will provide an overload to the hamstrings and lumbars that works very well for the Advanced Intensity Day Rotations.

After several months of adapting to a top set of five reps, the trainee can start using triples. The triple will work better for the same reasons as the traditional TM template; it allows for more weight to be done yet decreases the total time under tension to reduce the stress. After performing a heavy triple, powerlifters can drop about 10% for a back off triple. For example, in 2011 Chris rack pulled 655x3, and then backed off about 10% to 585x3. The heavier set will act as the primary strength stimulus, and then the back off set will demand the structures to do their job while fatigued – a trait that will be important in new PR's or third attempts.

Advanced Deadlift Rotation		
	Deadlift Stress	**Session Example**
Week 1	Heavy	3RM Or 2RM
Week 2	Speed	10 Singles, 60s Rest
Week 3	Volume	5RM Or 3RM With Back-Off Triple
Week 4	Speed	10 Singles, 60s Rest

Figure 4.6

The rack pull is considered a volume stress because of the relative higher amount of stress it provides on the targeted musculature compared to lower volume and high intensity deadlifts. That and there is an emphasis on doing more sets and reps on the rack pull; it transfers very well into doing away with "third attempt deadlift fatigue" at the meet. The heavy day can remain as a heavy triple, but we have used 2 Rep Maxes (and sometimes two doubles). The programmed rep range is dependent on how close the next meet is. The heavy day often has more of a weight goal instead of a rep goal. Since there is only one chance in four weeks to pull heavier through a full range of motion, we don't want to waste those reps. With Chris, he would gauge how he feels as he is warming up, and if things are feeling good (they usually did), we would push the target weight a little harder. If there was still at least two months from a scheduled meet, we would take bigger chances and have the mindset of "going for two or three" with a

weight that might be a personal record. Other times I have pulled the trigger and had him go for a PR single – in this style of programming, I'd like to see gym PRs creep over and increase higher than the meet PR's since the lifter is fresh for these deadlift sessions (i.e. he isn't squatting maximally prior to pulling heavy).

An advanced deadlifter will know during their warm-up and especially with the first rep how many reps they probably can do; in this case Chris is very in tune with his capabilities. In other words, getting this deep into this kind of advancement won't have general rules engraved in stone. Instead, use the heavy day to get a heavy single, double, or triple aiming for some kind of PR, even if it is only a modest one. Generally speaking, doubles or triples should primarily be progressed with PR single attempts only attempted occasionally (and usually at a meet). When a lifter is on this rotation for at least half a year, the singles can be followed by a back-off double or triple whereas the double could be followed by another back off double; this would garner a little bit more volume with heavier deadlifting after the initial heaviest set. Triples usually won't need a back off since their tonnage and time under tension are higher than the single or double. As a general rule, decrease at least 10% for back-off pulling sets.

The experienced lifter can also approach rack pulls slightly different. For example, in one workout in the first quarter of 2012, Chris rack pulled 675x3, then increased and did 700x1 (his goal for 2012 NAPF Raw Challenge was to pull 705). After that, he backed off to do 600x3. Despite coming off of several weeks of illness, he successfully hit all of his goals at the meet, including the third attempt deadlift.

This Advanced Deadlift Rotation works very well because it addresses the "locking out the deadlift" issue that is common in most lifters (whether due to mechanics or fatigue) and it allows the lifter to pull a full range of motion deadlift three times a month (one heavy and two speed days). The deadlift may not seem like a technical lift, but only performing partial reps will leave the lifter feeling inadequately prepared for a technically sound deadlift, especially in meet situations.

Matching Up the Advanced Squat and Deadlift Rotations

Just as before, the squat and deadlift rotations should be organized each week so that they aren't debilitating to each other (see Figure 4.7 below). The standard approach would result in the heavy week of one lift will be the speed week of the other lift.

Advanced Squat And Deadlift Rotations		
	Squat Stress	**Deadlift Stress**
Week 1	Speed	Heavy
Week 2	Heavy	Speed
Week 3	Speed	Volume
Week 4	Heavy	Speed

Figure 4.7

If the lifter were using the Weight Fluctuation Model – in which there is a "heavy day" and a "medium day" – then he could organize it so the most stressful pulling session is not the week before the heaviest squat session (see Figure 4.8 below). The only time when Chris' pulling session had an effect on the following week's training was in January of 2012 when he rack pulled the 675x3, 700x1, and then 600x3. Otherwise, lifters are usually fresh for the following week's squat session.

Rotations With Weight Fluctuation Model for Squat		
	Squat Stress	**Deadlift Stress**
Week 1	Speed	Heavy
Week 2	Heavy	Speed
Week 3	Speed	Volume
Week 4	Medium	Speed

Figure 4.8

In this example, the medium squat day occurs the week prior to the heavy deadlift day in order to have a slight back-off prior to the week of maximal deadlift sets. Note that with this structure, the heavy deadlift session occurs the week before the heaviest squat session. There should be plenty of time to recover in between each week's heavy sessions, but the lifter can use this template to prevent potential recovery issues.

Using the Split Template and Advanced Intensity Rotations for Powerlifting

Chapter 2 talked about using the regular Texas Method template for powerlifting, yet this chapter has introduced Intensity Day Rotations, the Split Template, additional methods of using assistance exercises, Advanced Intensity Day Rotations, and modified repetition schemes for heavy days. It may seem like a

lot, but it is easy to shift from the Off Season, to the Meet Prep phase, and transition into the Taper phase.

Any programmatic change from this chapter can be used in the Off Season phase. The Off Season can still be used for trying out special set and rep schemes (like ladders or tens), yet the lifter may only want to try something different for one or two months at a time before returning their Off Season focus to using the Split Template with Advanced Intensity Day Rotations. The Advanced Intensity Day Rotations benefit from several consecutive months of work, so the lifter shouldn't expect to only use it for a couple of months before the Taper. The nature of the Split Template is that it increases the total work done and distributes it evenly across the week compared to a regular TM Template. Also, Intensity Day Rotations (regular or advanced) result in heavy squatting and deadlifting no longer occur on the same day. The Bench Intensity Day also has its own day. This means that the lifter is more recovered and fresh for each session, yet no longer adapted to doing all three lifts on the same day – something they'll obviously need to do at the meet.

This may or may not be relevant to the lifter. In December of 2011, Chris and Mike competed at the USAPL Holiday Classic in Carrolton, TX without tapering and did very well. They treated it as a training day with the only change being that they did not deadlift heavy the week before. They were able to have success because of two reasons.

First, the Split Template along with Advanced Intensity Day Rotations are scheduled in a way where there is adequate rest between the heaviest or most stressful training days. Also note that even though the template doesn't call for heavy squats prior to heavy deadlifting, there are still speed squats that apply a different fatigue. In contrast, heavy squat days are followed by speed deadlifting.

Second, by using multiple sets of doubles or triples for squat and bench they built up an adaptation to perform several higher intensity sets in a single session. The multiple heavy sets increased their resistance to fatigue with heavier weights. Rack pulls primarily build the resistance to fatigue for deadlifts. By combining the programming template and specific methods of training heavier on the related lifts, the lifter can be "meet ready" most of the time. If good, conservative decisions are made for the first two attempts of each lift at the meet, then it all results in success.

All lifters won't have the same effect. It would make sense that lighter lifters are more affected by the heavy days and would need some training days that include squat, bench, and deadlift to ensure that they are ready for a meet. Such a lifter could shift back into a regular TM Template on the Intensity Days and perform all three lifts for several consecutive weeks before having a formal, albeit short, taper. It isn't necessary to go as heavy as possible in each lift. There are several options.

The first option is to keep the same squat and deadlift schedule, but merely add in the bench press between the lifts. Regardless whether the session called for speed or heavy squats, the lifter could just add their bench session after squats and before deadlifts or rack pulls.

"Normal" Vs. "Three Lift" Intensity Days		
	Normal Intensity Day	**Three Lift Intensity Day**
Week A	Heavy Squat Speed Deadlift	Heavy Squat Scheduled Bench Session Speed Deadlift
Week B	Speed Squat Heavy Deadlift	Speed Squat Scheduled Bench Session Heavy Deadlift

Figure 4.8. The only change is sandwiching the bench session between squat and deadlift.

Using a "Three Lift Intensity Day" composition for at least two weeks will ensure that the lifter receives both the psychological and physiological adaptation to doing all of the lifts on the same day. The above method in Figure 4.8 is probably the easiest and most effective way to do prepare for the meet, but the lifter could also administer a medium or heavy stress with all of the lifts. In such a case, each lift would be done medium or heavy. A medium stress would be about 85% for a few doubles on bench and squat (deadlift would only need one double). A heavy stress would be about 92 to 95% for doubles on bench and squat (with deadlift receiving a single rep at that intensity). Just like the Advance Intensity Day Rotations, the sets should be ascending. The "medium" or "heavy" stress refers to the final set as opposed to the intensity of all of the sets. See Figure 4.9 for an example.

Work-Set Examples For Medium and High Stress Days		
Lift (1RM)	**Stress**	
	Medium (~85%)	**High (~95%)**
Squat (600)	485x2, 500x2, 515x2	530x2, 550x2, 570x2
Bench (385)	300x2, 315x2, 330x2	320x2, 340x2, 360x2
Deadlift (650)	555x2	620x1

Figure 4.9. How to conduct medium and high stress sessions.

The specific percentage is not the focus, but aiming for a stress in the realm of "medium" and "heavy". The percentage merely provides a guideline. The lifter can organize Three Lift Intensity Days in subsequent weeks to flow into a meet or a taper. One option could consist of doing a heavy stress day, a medium stress day, then a low stress day the week before the meet. Other methods are displayed in Figure 4.10.

Intensity Day Options For Meet Prep				
(Weeks Out)	**Option 1**	**Option 2**	**Option 3**	**Option 4**
Four		Medium	Heavy	Heavy
Three	Heavy	Heavy	Medium	Heavy
Two	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
One	Low	Low	Low	Low
Meetxxxx				

Figure 4.10. Regardless of option, the meet is preceded by low and medium sessions.

Low stress days would be very light, perhaps anywhere from 70% to the weight that would be used on the first attempt on squat and bench (no deadlift the week before the meet). The most standard meet preparation that we've used is on the weekend before the meet, work up to the first attempt on squat and bench with the rules without deadlifting. At the beginning of the meet week, the lifter works up to his last warm-ups on squat and bench. Later in the week, usually two or three days out, the lifter hits a very light workout by going through the standard warm-up, but only working up to about 60% on squat and bench. Note that all reps would be with verbal commands from a partner or coach, and all bench reps would be paused.

Simple Taper			
Weeks Out	**Monday**	**Thursday**	**Saturday**
1	Normal Weekly Template, Possibly Reduce Assistance		Squat And Bench Openers
0	Squat And Bench ToVery Light Squat Last Warm-UpAnd Bench (~60%)		Meet

Figure 4.11. Note that the day of openers works as a Low Stress day.

Again, putting this much attention into fluctuating the Three Lift Intensity Day stress will usually not be necessary. However, if it is, the lifter now has plenty of options. They can further customize their preparation by using the Beginner or Medium Taper from Chapter 2. Experienced lifters will learn what works best for them. The common theme is that the week before the meet should consist of a lower stress and not include any significant deadlift work.

Some Notes On Advanced TM Methods

These advanced methods are designed to use much lower relative amounts of volume to garner very high increases in strength. At one point, Chris was only squatting 500-515-530 for sets of five and routinely squatting as heavy as 640x2. By using the Intensity Day Rotations, we staved off overtraining and never really needed to take de-load weeks with the lifters that used this program. It sort of accounts for overreaching by having a two week break before hitting the same lift heavy again. If the trainee's body is feeling beat down, then they should look at their Volume Day's work and make sure that isn't too high. In these later stages, the Volume Day is no longer the stressor. Instead, the various heavy and speed days comprise many variables that induce stress. The other aspect of this method's stress is the lower relative volume and the ample amount of rest time before another systemically heavy session (i.e. the lifter gets a full week of rest between the heaviest squat and deadlift sessions). If the volume is in check and the trainee still feels beat down, then the trainee should reevaluate the amount of assistance work that has been added to the template. Too much assistance will apply too much stress and detract from goals. Although de-loads aren't necessary when the template is implemented correctly, the trainee should use them if they are feeling particularly beat down – especially when they can't determine what programming variable is causing it.

This style of programming has influence from Westside Barbell and Bulgarian Weightlifting systems. It benefits from speed and high intensity work – like Westside programming – yet also builds on the same competitive lifts at high levels of intensity – like Bulgarian programming. The Split Routine is even closely related to the Westside template despite it being formed and used without Westside in mind. Westside programming is very interesting and successful, yet I still consider it to be most applicable to extremely advanced lifters who are using supportive lifting gear and performance enhancement drugs. There's nothing wrong with either of those things, yet a raw, un-drugged powerlifter will require different programming.

The end product – using the Split Template and Advanced Intensity Day Rotations – looks very different than the Regular TM Template and it has been influenced by many different training systems and coaches. The early part of the week still has a volume emphasis while the end of the week still has an intensity emphasis. This weekly structure paves the way for this advanced, yet elongated progression. A lifter who uses the Intensity Day rotation method for a year may find that their progress slows. Hopefully by then they will have been in tune with their programming enough to create a systematic way to make increases (usually in the form of changing the set and rep scheme on the Intensity Days). For example, I mentioned that with Chris we choose the weight that he will deadlift based on how he has felt and what he has recently done. I also base it on what I'd like to see him hit with respect to how much time he has before the meet. The closer we are to the meet, the higher weights I'd like to see him move compared to lighter weights with more reps. When Chris is more than three months out from a meet, then he is free to try whatever he wants within reason. One session he chose to hit his lifetime goal of deadlifting 600 for five reps (he did six). The more months he's on this rotation, the more data

we have to determine future goal weights. Where we choose to go in the program is very organic; it is based on what has worked and what hasn't.

Unfortunately, no program will work forever. Readers of this book should have a very long time before they will need to worry about these variables not working (we have been experimenting with these advanced methods for more than two years), yet having some direction on where to go in the future will satisfy curiosity and ease fear of the unknown. In Chapter 4 we explore some ideas on how to program for continued strength once the variables in this chapter have been exhausted.

CHAPTER 5 – And Beyond…

Throughout this book I have explained how to take a very simple program and evolve it over time. As a trainee adapts, his program must adapt along with him. Large programmatic changes aren't necessary to drive progress and make it difficult to discern what variables actually contribute to a desired adaptation. By using small, incremental changes and proper recovery, the trainee can consistently progress.

We know that individuals do not graduate into a new classification of adaptation by reaching a certain amount of weight lifted. Instead, a trainee is on a continuum that slowly increases the need for a proper stress and adaptation period. A novice won't jump into an advanced TM set-up because it won't be as effective compared to using a linear progression. He will gradually transition into a TM, and that TM will, out of necessity, shift into the advanced set up presented in the Chapter 4. The last few chapters are what I observed with myself, my friends, and other various strength trainees and raw powerlifters, yet this is as far as we have developed the Advanced Texas Method. The Advanced Intensity Day Rotations coupled with the Split Template were developed because the previous methods grew stale. Looking at them now, they seem to be an obvious progression. It is easy to look at breakthroughs in retrospect and say, "Well, duh," yet at the time we were paving the road of progress.

The lifters that have been utilizing this program are still making progress with these methods. Chris will need modified program in early 2012, and AC may require it in late 2013. Mike has been implementing the advanced methods, but has also experimented with some other concepts (seen later in this chapter). However, no program will work forever. This chapter is theoretical in nature; it proposes some ideas on where to go next in programming. It, of course, isn't a stab in the dark and is based on the adaptations built from the Advanced Texas Method and compounded with advanced programs created by the Giants of Strength Training. Bob Hoffman. Doug Hepburn. Bill Starr. Mark Berry. Various periodization experts like Frank Dick, Dr. Harre, Nadori, and Matveyev who largely edited or re-edited information and presented in it in their own language.

The idea isn't to jump into a full blown periodization program, but to be aware of them so that we can bridge the gap between where we are now and where we will eventually need to be. The methods in Chapters 3 and 4 dictate that every lift won't be heavy each week, yet every week has a heavy day. A typical periodization program will have weeks that shift from an emphasis on volume and then to intensity for peaking. Instead of jumping into a program that peaks once every six or more weeks, we should first see how we can inch along the continuum.

This is what this chapter is all about: proposing ideas on how to evolve into more of an advanced looking program. This isn't just for fun; it is necessary for lifters who will exhaust their progress using the methods in the previous two chapters. Subtle changes will always be preferable to extreme changes, so let's look at a few methods that can string along The Advanced Texas Method concepts.

Powerlifting Equipment

Most starting powerlifters idolize the most experienced lifters and aim to train in a similar way. Bands, chains, boards and boxes are commonly used, but the truth is that most people don't have any business using them. A lifter who cannot appropriately externally rotate at the hips to keep his knees out during maximal squats has other problems than attempting to box squat. A person who doesn't properly load their hamstrings in a conventional deadlift has more pressing issues than if he is going to deadlift with bands or chains in the next workout. The Texas Method is proof that a lifter can get very strong; it uses high intensity with specificity like Bulgarian weightlifting systems and fluctuates the heavy days and takes advantage of speed work like the Westside Method.

The most important aspect of the lack of equipment is so that the competitive lifts are performed exactly the same in every session. The Westside Method – an extremely, highly advanced style of programming – utilizes variation to induce stress on both speed and heavy days. A lifter within his first several years of lifting – the population that the Texas Method applies to – will still benefit from perfecting his mechanics with the competitive lifts and let accessory movements augment musculature development to eradicate lifting imbalances.

However, there is a time and place for these pieces of equipment, and we have started to introduce them slowly into the Advanced Texas Method. Here are a few that we currently utilized followed by the other tools and how we hypothesize that we will use them.

The Slingshot

The Texas Method methodology primarily applies to raw lifting. Supportive gear consists of a material that crosses joints in order to aid the lifter in a given movement. Squat and deadlift suits resist hip flexion and help extend the shoulders. Knee wraps resist knee flexion and help extend the knee. Bench shirts resist shoulder extension and help flex the shoulder. A belt is not included in this category because the belt does not cross a joint, but a segment. A belt improves the safety of lifting by increasing the intra-abdominal and thoracic pressure because it decreases the volume of the trunk (i.e. volume decreases, amount of air stays the same, therefore pressure increases – Boyle's Law). As a result the abdominals contract into the belt to help increase torso stabilization. A belt improves efficiency and therefore safety in lifting in the same way that weightlifting shoes do. The fact that it doesn't cross a joint differentiates it from "supportive gear" that assists joint movement.

The Slingshot is a piece of supportive gear that is quite handy for geared and raw lifters alike. It is a piece of fabric that slides onto the upper arms. A piece of elastic fabric attaches the two upper-arm sleeves together. When the lifter descends on a bench, that elastic fabric is stretched over the chest and helps provide force out of the bottom. The fabric pulls the humerus into the torso, therefore putting the shoulder into or maintaining external rotation. This distributes the force more evenly across the anterior

shoulder girdle (including the pectorals) and puts the elbows under the wrists to distribute force through the belly of the triceps.

Since the Slingshot offers assistance out of the bottom, but doing so with externally rotates shoulders, the lockout is more efficient. There is less help from the elastic material at the lockout, so the lifter handles more weight as they lockout. This means that they can have greater progressive overload on the structures at the lockout, and do so with efficient technique.

The Slingshot can be used during high rep sets, yet for our purposes in the Texas Method it helps the lifter use more weight on their Intensity Day for bench. Chris and Mike have used it after already doing some ascending doubles. They'll add about 15 pounds to the weight of the last double, which works to be about 3% more, and do a triple with the Slingshot on. This is just preliminary experimenting.

I'd prefer to use something more systematic. Assuming that a lifter is on the Split Template with Advanced Intensity Day Rotations, he could use the slingshot on all heavy sets for a month, transition to use the slingshot for a set or two *after* the heavy sets for a month, and then have a month of no Slingshot work. If the lifter were competing in powerlifting, the month of not using the Slingshot would occur right before the meet taper.

Slingshot Progression Before A Meet	
Week	**Slingshot Use**
1-4	On All Heavy Sets
5-8	On Sets After Normal Heavy Sets
9 - 12	No Slingshot
13 - 14	Taper And Perform Meet

Figure 5.1

After several cycles, I presume that we would find out what works better and how long it takes an individual to transfer back into completely raw benching. I presume that eventually a lifter will be able to have an idea of what they can bench raw given what they can do on the Slingshot, but this tool is still too new in our arsenal to gauge such figures. I'd also predict that this discrepancy between raw and Slingshot loads would be different between lighter and heavier lifters, differing arm lengths, and differing grip widths. Either way, the Slingshot appears to be a useful tool for a raw bench presser.

Reverse Band Deadlifts

I first got the idea to use reverse band deadlifts from Quest Athletics coach Sherman Ledford. He uses them in his single ply deadlift programs, and I found them to be intriguing. To execute them, the lifter would set up their barbell inside of a squat rack. They would wrap bands over the top – typically over

the pull-up bar portion of the rack – and wrap the ends of the band around their barbell. When the barbell is on the floor, the bands would be stretched tight. The bands provide upward tension on the bar to make the bar lighter off the floor. The bands will start to slacken and the lifter handles the majority of the barbell weight through the deadlift lockout. It allows the lifter to complete a full range of motion deadlift, yet overload the top half of the range of motion to improve their lockout.

A lifter will be able to use more weight on reverse band deadlifts than they would without the bands. Note that the bands don't alter the mechanics or assist any joints, and that's why we have started using them. It allows us to apply a "progressive overload", especially on the deadlift lockout. The effect will be similar to the rack pull, but more specific given that it trains the full deadlift range of motion.

Mike reverse band deadlifts 700.

A systematic progression will be preferable over randomly selecting set and rep schemes to try with the reverse band deadlifts. I am basing the following on my conversation with Sherman Ledford; therefore I'll call it "The Sherman Method". He would have his lifters complete a series of ascending singles with even weight jumps between singles. The last single was progressed every week until several weeks out from the meet, the lifter was pulling more weight than they intended to at the meet. His lifters were progressively using single ply gear in accordance with their meet preparation, but we will ignore that.

In a given workout, a lifter could complete five or six singles and increase each single by 20 pounds. See Figure 5.2 for what a given workout would look like. In order to progress this over time, the lifter could aim to increase the final single by 10 to 20 pounds in subsequent weeks. It would be best to sync the progression up with a meet. See Figure 5.3 to see how a lifter could progress his weekly sets.

"Sherman Method" Of Using Singles With Reverse Band Deadlifts	
Set #	**Weight**
1	620
2	640
3	660
4	680
5	700

Figure 5.2

Example Of How To Progress The Heaviest Set With "The Sherman Method"	
Week	**Weight**
1	655
2	670
3	685
4	700

Figure 5.3

In this example, the lifter is using reverse band deadlifts every week, yet it could be implemented on the Deadlift Intensity Day on the Advanced Intensity Day Rotations. The amount of increase each week is variable; this example merely provides an example. Note that the more reverse band deadlifts are used, the more a lifter will know how it correlates with his actual deadlift, yet this relationship will vary between individuals.

Mike has also been experimenting by using heavy singles in the first week followed by a top set of five in the second week; the effectiveness of this method remains untested at the time of this writing, yet Mike has reverse band deadlifted 700 pounds and aims to pull 650 at the 2012 USAPL Nationals. Readers should be wary of implementing weekly deadlifting if they have used the speed/heavy alternate; Mike has not shifted into the speed/heavy alternate, hence his weekly deadlift work.

Since the band lightens the load at the bottom range of motion, using bands may reduce the overall stress. However, the lifter will be locking out a greater load than they would be with a regular deadlift, so the total dose of stress may be comparable to regular deadlifting. To be safe, I would first program reverse band deadlifts on the Deadlift Intensity Day in an Advanced Intensity Day Rotation.

Box Squats

The Texas Method is reliant on specificity at intensity. Speed squats are used in the Intensity Day Rotations because they are specific to the squat the lifter aims to compete in. They improve the bounce, improve neuromuscular efficiency, and do so with the same exact mechanics as a heavy squat.

Box squats are typically used by geared powerlifters to apply an overload through a certain range of motion as well as to accentuate the stretch on the hamstrings. They are usually accompanied by a wide stance, vertical shins, and an emphasis on reaching back with the butt to stretch the hamstrings.

Box squats have not been a part of any Texas Method variant we've used, and for good reason. However, after talking to my friend Shannon Green at Warrior Performance (in New South Wales, Australia), I may have some lifters use them on their speed day. He reflected that whenever he used

speed box squats – with the emphasis on getting a stretch on the hamstrings – his deadlift strength received a lot of benefit.

The hamstrings are an important aspect of deadlifting, and this book has mentioned various exercises to improve them by using RDLs, banded good mornings, rack pulls, and reverse band deadlifts. Yet speed box squats would be another way to build this area. Here is how I would use them for a lifter who has been developed with the principles in this book.

There has not yet been a need to vary the specific nature of the lifts; speed squats and deadlifts are just like their heavy counterparts. In the case of speed box squats, I would use the *same* stance width, yet put an emphasis on sitting back to stretch the hamstring. The lifter would externally rotate at the hip to keep the knees out – the same way that they always do – but will reach back the butt and make contact with a box that is at their normal squat depth (i.e. within one to two inches below parallel, as defined as the acetabulum moving below the top of the patella). In order to further this stretch, the lifter could think "vertical shins". However, they would benefit more from wearing flat shoes instead of the standard weightlifting shoes; the drop in heel height will subtly shift positioning in the ankle and knee to improve hamstring stretch. This would not be advisable on a regular, heavy squat because the heel height is necessary to properly incorporate an even distribution across the quadriceps and the hamstrings.

The lifter would not relax on the box, but lower down, touch the box (by "kissing" their butt on the surface), have a slight pause to exaggerate the hamstring stretch, and then explode upward with hip drive. Relaxing on the box would be counterproductive because it would reduce the tension on the hamstrings, which is the primary goal in using a box. The rep scheme would remain the same as regular speed squats; perform a double every minute for a total of ten sets.

I would not use heavy box squats for someone on this type of program, but if I did, the emphasis would be on maintaining tension and tightness when touching the box, and the lifter would *not* relax their body to necessitate a rock forward to ascend off of the box. I can't imagine a worse idea than reducing tension in the hip and thigh musculature and allowing the full weight of the bar to completely compress the spinal column.

Using the High Bar and Front Squat

There have been various internet debates on whether the High Bar (HB) or Low Bar (LB) squats are better. These arguments discuss musculature involved as well as mechanics that compare the efficiency of each method. This book is not the place for a comprehensive comparison, so I'll be brief: there is utility in each version.

The LB squat utilizes more of the posterior chain and is dependent on a stretch reflex on the hamstrings to drive the butt up. The proper bar positioning on the back is difficult for inflexible people to achieve, and the movement is difficult to master. The HB squat has a more vertical back angle which places the

knees in a more forward position at the bottom. This emphasizes mostly the quadriceps, yet the gluteals are also involved out of the bottom ROM. This isn't to say the hamstrings are absent during the HB squat, yet they aren't emphasized as much as the LB squat. During the HB squat, the bar sits on the middle traps right below the C7 (or bottom of the neck) and therefore is much easier for inflexible trainees. For a beginner, the HB squat is also easier to perform than the LB squat since balance is simple (i.e. "drive the heels") and hip drive isn't critical.

The motor pathways that perform each movement are very different and beginners will not be able to seamlessly switch between them. Instead they should be assigned one version of squatting for several months. If the trainee lacks a coach or is inflexible in the shoulders, then the HB will be easier to perform correctly. If the trainee aims to powerlift, then the LB squat will be more optimal as it will have the potential to handle more weight. If the trainee aims to do Olympic weightlifting, then the HB squat will emulate the positioning of a clean and snatch as well as develop the necessary musculature to perform these movements optimally. In other words, the trainee and their goals should dictate squatting style instead of jaded arguing on which squat is better.

Most trainees and lifters that have been following these TM modifications will be LB squatters. For general strength training purposes, the LB squat will be very effective at improving the posterior chain (assuming flexibility and technique are adequate). In fact, it is likely that most readers of this book will barely have front squatted and definitely have not HB squatted recently. This is okay, because they can now be sprinkled into the program to help the squat develop. If a reader has primarily HB squatted and aims to powerlift, I would implore him to consider learning the LB squat (as well as utilizing RDLs weekly).

My friend Brent started playing around with the HB squat since he puts a premium on doing the Olympic lifts in his program. After using them for a while, he observed that they augmented his LB squat when he went back to them. After trying it for myself, I echoed the same results. I used the HB or front squat with a few different lifters and noticed that their LB looked more solid as a result.

Since the LB squat puts a premium on hip extension, the knee extensors (quadriceps) aren't as trained as seriously as the posterior chain. Anyone who gets sore from mechanically sound LB squats will note that their groin and hamstrings are most tender. By HB squatting the quads are built up and strengthened so that they can better assist in the LB squat, particularly on the middle of the ascent – the ROM after the 'bounce out of the bottom' has occurred. For a trainee that has primarily LB squatted for 18 to 24 months, utilizing the HB and front squat can augment the LB squat. Since the front squat (FS) has similar mechanics to the HB, it can also be used. Front squatting places more of an emphasis on the quadriceps as the back angle *must* be very vertical to keep the bar racked on the deltoids. The front squat will have a lower systemic stress, yet can impart a higher local stress on the quadriceps.

After the 2011 USAPL Raw Nationals, Mike decided to start HB and front squatting on his volume squat day. What started out as a brief post-meet experiment turned into an effective programming tool. At the meet, Mike was slow on the descent and not strong out of the hole, yet he hit a 581 squat, though it was red-lighted due to depth (a questionable call, in my opinion). He then switched to using the

speed/heavy Intensity Days and utilizes HB and front squats on his Volume Day and feels much stronger and faster out of the bottom. The problem was that Mike was using the vertical styles of squatting on every volume day. My analysis is that this taught him to be forward in his knees regularly. At the 2012 NAPF Raw Challenge, Mike was red-lighted on his second and third attempt. The calls were questionable, especially with his abnormal body type, but we scrapped the idea of using vertical squat styles on volume day. The following is what I would use first.

The HB/FS and LB Rotation

HB/FS Rotation On TM Volume Days		
Week	**Type Of Squat**	**Sets x Reps**
Designation		
Speed	HB	3x5
Heavy	LB	3x5 Ascending
Speed	FS	3x3
Heavy	LB	3x5 Ascending

Figure 5.4. HB is high bar, FS is front squat, and LB is low bar.

In this example, the Volume Squat Day will alternate between the LB squat and either the HB squat or FS. This example places the vertical squat styles on the speed weeks. By leaving the LB variation on the heavy weeks, it would ensure that there aren't any mechanical problems with the Squat Intensity Day later in the week due to using other styles of squatting.

It is possible that utilizing the HB squat and FS will work better for some lifters, and not as well for others. I think that most lifters that primarily use the LB squat will benefit from them. The added quadriceps strength and size will only work to improve the efficiency of the LB squat. However, lifters with longer femurs – like Mike – may benefit from the HB/FS even more. Long femurs will place the hips farther back from the knees at the bottom of the squat, so LB squatting won't build the quad musculature as well as a lifter with a shorter femurs – like me or Chris. For long femur lifters, filling out and strengthening the anterior chain would theoretically have a greater return on investment for LB squatting strength compared to the short femur lifter, assuming the two anatomically dichotomous lifters had the same history in exclusively LB squatting.

And this is the point with types of squatting – one type of squatting will develop musculature specifically for that movement. When the lifter attempts to do the alternative, their musculature isn't set up to perform optimally with the new movement's mechanics. A LB squatter won't recover from cleans and snatches well because his quadriceps won't be developed appropriately, even if he had the mobility and could differentiate with the new movement pattern. It is a combination of developing the motor

pathway, or skill, as well as altering the musculature to properly execute the skill. By the same token, a high bar squatter will not perform well in the LB squat when trying it out the first time. He too will have to develop the necessary skill and musculature. This is why it is a waste of time to debate which squat is better. Instead, program the HB squat and FS when in the later phases of the TM indicated in Chapter 3. As long as the vertical styles of squatting don't make up the majority of the program, they won't do any harm if LB mechanics are solid

Shifting Into Advanced Programming

In *FIT* – by Dr. Long Kilgore, Dr. Michael Hartman, and me – Dr. Kilgore discusses various intermediate and advanced strength training programs. He discusses various methods of weekly loading. The Medium-Light-Heavy loading was used by York Barbell as indicated in Bob Hoffman's Simplified System of Barbell Training.

"In this model, Monday is a medium load day, Wednesday is a light day, and Friday is a heavy day. This model worked very well and was built to accommodate weekend competitions and the York barbell picnics, periodic Saturday events sponsored by Hoffman where those training with him or near him would assemble for maxing out and food." [1]

I point this out because it is pretty much the premise for the original Texas Method template; Volume Day acts as a medium stress while Intensity Day acts as a heavy stress. Heavy-Medium-Light is another way to load a week's training sessions; the light day at the end of the week ensures that there is quality rest before the heavy day at the start of the next week.

Then, there is a method to increase the frequency of training throughout the week by adding in more training days, albeit with light loading. The frequency can progress in how stressful the training days are and then continue in increasing the frequency up to five and six training days a week. This is essentially what occurred in the TM progression through Part 1 and Part 2). The stock TM template started as a Medium-Light-Heavy loading and then Assistance Day was added (see Part 1) to create a Medium-Light-Light-Heavy loading. Then the days were shuffled around to have "Pressing Volume" and "Squatting Volume" days; they act as Light and Medium days respectively. The "Pressing Intensity" and "Squatting/Pulling Intensity" act as Medium and Heavy days respectively. This method of increasing the stress and frequency of training days over time is exceptionally useful for Olympic weightlifting; check out the strength chapter in FIT for more.

Let's focus on using this idea of loading fluctuation and expand it to a larger scale. The concept will be applied to a weekly fluctuation. Here is one example from the same chapter in FIT.

			Strength		Mass	
Week	Load	%	Sets	Reps	Sets	Reps
1	Heavy	Maximum	8	2	5	10
2	Medium	85%	8	2	5	10
3	Light	70%	6	2	3	10
4	Heavy	Maximum	8	2	5	10
5	Medium	85%	8	2	5	10
6	Light	70%	6	2	3	10

Figure 5.5. Used with permission from FIT.

This template uses the Heavy-Medium-Light stress for consecutive weeks and holds the set and repetition scheme constant throughout (with eight sets of two reps). What I like about this concept is that it will fluctuate the systemic stress for a hormonal peak for heavy weeks. It is the same thing as a Medium-Light-Heavy fluctuation when used in consecutive rotations over time. What I don't like is that it sets parameters to use the same repetition scheme every single week. I would only use this method for a specific type of trainee. The trainee would have balanced strength and musculature and wouldn't require much assistance exercises to develop his strength or musculature. He may only want or need to focus on the primary lifts to develop progress. This trainee may even be coming off of a template that involved various assistance exercises. In this case, by using this "eight doubles" scheme, he would focus his recovery efforts solely into the biggest lifts. A strength trainee who opts to use this method would probably only include the following exercises: squat, bench, press, deadlift, and RDL.

However, most trainees, even at this stage, are not perfectly balanced. They will benefit from a few assistance exercises to further their strength or musculature development. Some may even be bored at the prospect of only doing eight doubles every workout. The above template also doesn't provide weekly strategy with each lift or training session. It doesn't indicate if the reps should be ascending or across. The "eight doubles" rep scheme has utility, yet isn't my first choice.

There are two methods I see as possible templates for the trainee who is ready to step into advanced programming. Both consist of a three week rotation of either Medium-Heavy-Light or Heavy-Medium-Light. The difference is what type of loading occurs the week before the Heavy week; the former is Medium and the latter is Light.

As programming advancement progresses, the number of trainees that are adapted to the point of requiring that programming decreases; there just aren't many trainees who legitimately need advanced programming. However, I know that some of my lifters will need to take a step forward and I have been thinking about where to take them for months. I settled on this three week rotation idea. This approach emulates the fundamentals of periodization programming in that higher levels of volume are followed by periods of higher intensity. It also isn't a wild stab in the dark as most advanced programs have some

kind of weekly fluctuation. This method of stress fluctuation in a three week cycle is a transition into the longer developing periodized approaches. For example, we could go from a three week rotation to one using four weeks. After they adapt to a four week rotation, a five week rotation could be used, followed by a six week rotation. The key is that multi-week rotations can be advanced by adding more time if or when the lifter needs longer cycles. The first step remains three weeks as there is no reason to peak every four, six, or eight weeks when we can still do so in three. With all of that being said, these methods are untested by me personally, although this type of programming has been used for at least fifty years. I will clarify how I would use it if I had to today, but it would likely implemented or incorporated within the context of what program the lifters have recently been using. Lastly, I want to point out that this is for a raw, non-drugged powerlifter or strength trainee. There are many programs for geared lifting that benefit from the use of gear and drugs, but I haven't worked with this population.

Medium-Heavy-Light

Programming in the intermediate and advanced stages is dependent on the lifter being very "in tune" with his body and how it responds from training. A benefit of this rotation is that it includes a scheduled de-load week every three weeks. This will be a new concept to the lifter that has gone through the TM programming progression, yet it will allow us to administer quality work in the Medium and Heavy weeks. One supporting argument for this Medium-Heavy-Light method is that the medium week will provide some volume stress, yet it will taper the volume down while the intensity increases into the heavy week so that the final heavy day – the one in which the most maximal loads will be hit for the three week cycle – isn't done after a layoff. This would mean that the lifter handles some decently heavy weight early in the week which means that there won't be a shock from the heavier loads later in the week. Sometimes if a lifter hasn't lifted heavy in a week – which would happen in the Medium-Light-Heavy set-up – the weight can feel exceptionally heavy because they lost a little bit of neurological adaptation of innervating motor units to produce the force AND their cardiovascular system isn't used to the high pressure changes associated with heavy lifting. The sensation of lots of pressure in the head isn't uncommon when going back to heavy lifting after a layoff; this is how blood vessels can be ruptured, which look like little red dots in the eyes, on the face, or around the neck and shoulder region. Having a Medium week before the Heavy week would gradually increase the intensity to avoid these neurological or cardiovascular issues.

On the other hand, trying to perform some higher intensity work the week after hitting some volume work may inhibit the amount of weight that can be used in the Heavy week. I leave it up to the lifter to decide which method they want to try first (since they should know how they respond to training by now), but let's look at how we would program this throughout the week.

Set And Reps For MED-HVY-LT		
	1st Squat	**2nd Squat**
MEDIUM	5x5	3x5
HEAVY	3x3	Singles/2RM
LIGHT	Speed Squat	70% 3x5

Figure 5.6

Medium Week

This approach still uses the Split Template that was discussed in Chapter 3, so "1st Squat" refers to the first squatting session in the week while "2nd Squat" refers to the second session. The cycle begins with a 5x5 and then followed by a 3x5. A likely question will be, "What percentage of 1RM should those two workouts be?" Honestly, I'm not sure yet. At this point the lifter will not have done a 5x5 in a while because they aren't necessary. As with any program, lower weights should be used at first. A safe number would be something a bit less than what was being used on the recent 3x5 sets in the program. I recommend using sets across on Medium week. Ascending sets were used with the Advanced TM Rotations in order to reduce the overall volume in the first squatting session to allow the Intensity Day Rotations to flourish, yet that won't be necessary in this program. Using a different weight on each set in Medium Week will just make things confusing.

Use a weight lighter than previous 3x5s for the 5x5, and then increase the weight a bit for the second session's 3x5. The idea here is to generate higher levels of volume in this week, but to taper the volume a bit in the later part of the week to prep for Heavy Week.

This set and rep scheme primarily refers to squatting because the bench or press programming may be in a different stage of development. Remember that the bench/press programming shifts away from the "alternating bench and press every week" to "doing them every week with an emphasis on one of them". This may be able to continue depending on where the lifter is at in his development. Assuming bench and press are used with this weekly rotation, and then they could both be performed for the indicated set and rep scheme. If the lifter is powerlifting (they likely will be to advance this far) he should do the bench press first. He could even treat the press as more of an assistance exercise and use it with a lower set/rep scheme. Another method could be to press in the first session and bench in the second session (or vice versa). Other methods and equipment could be applied to improve the top, middle, or bottom range of motion. Whatever the method, the sets, reps, volume, and intensity should mimic that of Medium, Heavy, or Light weeks that they reside in.

Heavy Week

Heavy week continues the shift in set and rep scheme and uses a 3x3 approach. This strips some volume off and increases the intensity. Whereas Medium week should use sets across, I prefer ascending sets for 3x3s. A lifter should be able to make at least ten pound jumps for his triple; this will help increase the last set's load.

The second session will act as the money making session of the cycle; the heaviest weights should be lifted on this day. The lifter should use doubles or singles to achieve this. Some options include ascending singles, ascending doubles, 2RM, or even working up to a 1RM. This day is akin to the original Intensity Day in the earlier stages of the TM. I recommend exhausting the ascending doubles or 2RM method since powerlifting meets are a more appropriate arena to test 1RMs. Also, using doubles will increase the total work with very high percentages and provide good data for choosing attempts at the meet. Whatever method is used, lifters need to ensure that it is implemented systematically. They should have a clear idea of what weights they are doing in a given session and what they will hit in the heavy session three weeks later. One option could be three ascending doubles, where the load is increased by ten pounds every cycle. Another option could be working up to a 2RM and increasing it by five or ten pounds every cycle, followed by one to three back-off doubles. Five ascending singles could also be used that include ten pound jumps with the final single increased every cycle. These are just several examples of a systematic heavy day; organized programming will provide a better measuring stick for progress than "winging it," especially at this level of advancement.

Light Week

This week is pretty simple: do lower amounts of work to recuperate and prepare for the next cycle. When I originally wrote the template, I placed 3x5 squatting at 70% on both of the squatting days. Then I remembered how beneficial speed squatting is to lifters. In the Advanced TM style it provided an active deload but also improved the bounce out of the hole. I decided to place them in the first squat session of the light week. The reasoning was to have at least one speed day in the cycle, but do it early in the Light week instead of later so that it doesn't provide too much stress closer to the Medium week's first session of 5x5 squatting. Lifters should keep in mind that speed squats are more stressful than a 3x5 done at 70%. In actuality, a lifter should be plenty recovered and can probably use speed squats on both days. Given the discussion earlier in the chapter on using speed box squats, a lifter could use them on one of the speed days.

MED-HVY-LT Deadlift Rotation

The deadlift rotation should match the weekly stress emphasis since the focus is now on fluctuating the body's systemic stress every week. Let's look at how this template would work.

MED-HVY-LT Deadlift Rotation	
	Deadlift Session
MEDIUM	85% Triple
HEAVY	2RM/1RM/3RM
LIGHT	Speed
MEDIUM	85% Triple
HEAVY	Rack Pull
LIGHT	Speed

Figure 5.7

This was the first concept I drafted for this three week cycle. The Medium Week's deadlifting shouldn't get out of hand because anything significantly heavy will depress the squatting and pulling for Heavy Week. I like the idea of using a medium to moderate triple. I'm not a fan of sets of five as they provide a much higher time under tension and subsequently volume. Also, a heavy set of five can put a lifter out of commission for two weeks, and I need them to perform well for the following week. Besides, lower rep deadlifting was used regularly in the later TM stages, so using fives will be more stressful than the lifter thinks. Even if the triple weight is too high, at least it is only a triple. This will introduce the idea of pulling several reps, but not going extremely heavy. The lifter should keep in mind that the Medium Week pulling is only to apply a medium stress, and his money-making pulling will occur the following week. The medium day could also consist of reverse band deadlifts done for a top triple.

The heavy day should revolve around heavy doubles or triples (again, singles are best reserved for competition). Depending on where the lifter is in their development and how far from a meet they are, they may opt for fewer reps and higher weight. At this point, the lifter should have an idea of what kind of weight they can lift maximally based on their performance in a 3RM or 2RM.

Speed deadlifts are used on the light weeks, but they could also be replaced by a light set of five around 70%. If the lifter is feeling particularly wrecked, they could always forgo any pulling in the light week.

Rack pulls should have been used regularly in the advanced TM methods, so the lifter should have an idea of what they use for reps. They can continue using a heavy set of five, or shift into progressing triples on rack pulls. If a heavy triple is used, then they could back off for another triple to apply some additional stress to the lumbar and hamstrings when they are already fatigued.

The problem with this rotation is that it only would have the lifter deadlifting a full range of motion lift with heavy weights once every six weeks. To work around this, the lifter could warm-up with deadlifts

on their rack pull day. They could work up to a moderate single or double, then shift to rack pulls. Here are some strategies to use:

1. Single or double on up to a weight that is a bit below the intended rack pull weight, then move into the rack and do a medium and/or moderate warm-up, then shift into the rack pull set. In this scenario, the deadlifts would end a little bit below the weight of the rack pull work set.
2. Single or double on up to a heavy weight (but maybe not as much as the previous Heavy week's set), then back off to hit a warm-up or two on rack pulls, then the work set of rack pulls. In this scenario, the deadlifts would go up heavier than the rack pull prior to rack pulling.

In either case, there is some rack pull warm-up prior to the actual set. This is to ensure that the hamstrings are prepared to handle the large amounts of tension present in a properly executed rack pull (we wouldn't want an injury due to negligence). If there is deadlifting prior to rack pulling, then the lifter shouldn't worry about hitting a back off set on rack pulls. After getting adapted to a few sessions of deadlifting before rack-pulling, the lifter could then increase the work by doing a back off set of rack pulls. This would be an example of getting adapted to a set work load before increasing the total amount of work or stress.

The lifter should keep in mind that the rack pull is primarily used as a tool to train the lockout of the deadlift under fatigue, hence the use of multi-rep sets. This is why heavy rack pull singles aren't utilized often. The lifter should focus on the lumbar and hamstring musculature doing their job properly when fatigued – round backs and pushing the knees forward will be a waste of time.

Program Example

Here is a program example that incorporates the squat and deadlift portions from above and uses a standard Split Template approach to the bench programming.

MEDIUM - HEAVY - LIGHT Program Example				
	Volume Bench	**1st Squat**	**Intensity Bench**	**2nd Squat**
MEDIUM	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Squat 5x5 RDL 5x5 BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Squat 3x5 85% DL Or Reverse Band DL Band GM
HEAVY	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Squat 3x3 RDL 3x5 BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Squat Singles/Doubles DL 2RM/3RM Or Rack Pull Band GM
LIGHT	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Speed Squat Round Back Ext BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Speed Squat Speed DL Band GM

Figure 5.8

Keep in mind that this is a generic example that doesn't take into account the specifics of a lifter. I have included some basic compound assistance exercises that are beneficial to most lifters for reasons stated in Part 1 and earlier chapters here in Part 2. The assistance work has been set up to mimic the weekly stress that they are placed in. The squat and deadlift work have been explained above.

The bench and press work is the aspect that will most likely be modified for an individual. For example, the Ladder Volume method that Mike developed in his bench training may still be working and could be used here. It could even be used, but tweaked in a way that it mimics the weekly stress (perhaps fewer ladders in light week). Ladders could even be used in the Medium week on bench with press following the recommendations in this example. There are clearly many possibilities that can coincide with the systemic weekly fluctuation of the squat and deadlift programming.

Heavy-Medium-Light

This is the second of the three-week-cycle options, yet it doesn't look as appealing as the Medium-Heavy-Light method. This method places a Light Week before the Heavy Week. While the Light Week can allow for some good recovery before going heavy, it may be too much down time before the Heavy Week. As discussed in the last section, we don't exactly know which will be preferable, but so far my lifters like the previous example better than this one.

Set and Reps For HVY-MED-LT		
	1st Squat	**2nd Squat**
HEAVY	Singles/2RM/3RM	3x3
MEDIUM	3x5	5x5
LIGHT	70% 3x5	Speed Squat

Figure 5.9

This is very similar to the last section, except the sessions are in reverse order. Figure 5.9 may look confusing since it begins with the heavy week. Instead, think of it like a MEDIUM-LIGHT-HEAVY set up, like this:

Set and Reps for HVY-MED-LT, Different Perspective		
	1st Squat	**2nd Squat**
MEDIUM	3x5	5x5
LIGHT	70% 3x5	Speed Squat
HEAVY	3x3	Singles/2RM/3RM

Figure 5.10

Think of it as a Volume Week, then a rest, then an Intensity Week. The volume progressively builds in the Medium week, then there is a reduction in load followed by some the maximal lifting. I placed the heaviest session in the second squat session of the Heavy Week because I thought it would be important to use the ascending 3x3 to rev up for the heaviest lifting done later in the week. The heaviest session could occur first; at this point it is up to the lifter.

As of this writing, my advice would be to use the Medium-Heavy-Light method. If it is difficult to hit quality weights during the Heavy Week, then the lifter could try out the alternate Heavy-Medium-Light in this section. The deadlift matches up in the same way:

HVY-MED-LT Deadlifting Rotation	
	Deadlift session
HEAVY	2RM/1RM/3RM
MEDIUM	85% Triple
LIGHT	Speed
HEAVY	Rack Pull
MEDIUM	85% Triple
LIGHT	Speed

Figure 5.11

This method could allow for fresher deadlifting after coming off a week break. While the squat may not progress as well, it is likely that heavier loads could be hit on the deadlift using this method. Again, since it hasn't been tested, nothing can be said definitively.

All of the discussion regarding how to use rack pulls and deadlifting prior to rack pulling still holds true in this Heavy-Medium-Light rotation.

Program Example

HEAVY - MEDIUM - LIGHT Program Example				
	Volume Bench	**1st Squat**	**Intensity Bench**	**2nd Squat**
MEDIUM	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Squat 3x5 RDL 5x5 BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Squat 5x5 85% DL Or Rev Band DL Band GM
LIGHT	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Speed Squat Round Back Ext BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Speed Squat Speed DL Band GM
HEAVY	Bench 3x5 Press 3x5 Pull-Ups	Squat 3x3 RDL 3x5 BB Row 3x5	Bench, Ascending Doubles Close-Grip Bench 3x3	Squat Singles/Doubles/Etc DL 2RM/3RM Or Rack Pull Band GM

Figure 5.12

Other Set/Rep Schemes

The primary goal of this step into advanced programming was to fluctuate the stress of each week in order to allow a cycle of supercompensation for progress. Intermediate programming can be simplified as a weekly progression whereas advanced programming consists of multi-week progressions. It is possible to garner the same weekly stress by using other set and rep schemes. I chose the ones in this section because they are simple and easy to implement. 5x5s may be horrid and not have a place in programming, but they are only done once in every cycle. It is possible to use something like "eight sets of three reps" or "timed singles for volume", yet I like the schemes I used in this section because they include fives, threes, and singles or doubles. It is a nice blend within the strength training rep scheme. If a lifter wanted to shift into lower rep schemes – perhaps they need to stay in a weight class – then I would advise them to utilize the set and rep schemes that accommodate their goal. However, solely focusing on singles or doubles in training will create a specific adaptation unprepared for greater time under tension associated with higher rep sets (e.g. a set of five). Regularly using fives and fewer reps makes for a blended adaptation.

A Word to Potential Advanced Program Users

This chapter began with a comparison of The Advanced Texas Method with Bulgarian and Westside methodology. The advanced programs in this chapter move away from those systems. Given that The Advanced Texas Method evolved with small programmatic changes, I suspect that we will maintain the Split Template scheduling and aim to keep the emphasis on intensity. For my lifters that near the limit of what these progressions allow, I will probably take a page out of Westside's book and implement a variation of lifts. I would slowly make these changes, and the varied lifts I implement would not be extreme. For example, I stated earlier in the chapter that I would use the same stance for speed box squats; the stress will already significantly change due to the presence of the box and the emphasis on hamstring stretching, so there isn't a need to alter the stance.

There are still other tools to learn about and implement. We are only in the beginning stages of using The Slingshot or bands, and we haven't used chains (which provide a very different stress compared to bands). We haven't used alternate forms of deadlifting like the sumo or trap bar variations, but they may have utility in developing musculature to augment both the squat and deadlift in competition. There are many other non-Westside methods to use and implement and 70's Big will never stop learning and seeking new programming ideas. Nevertheless, this is where our travels with The Texas Method end. They started with a simple variation in volume and intensity and progressed into the hairy, rippling beast it is today.

If you implement any of these methods, whether from this or previous chapters, then let us know how it worked for you on 70sBig.com. While I put a lot of time and thought into developing these ideas, they can and should always be refined. There may be things here that work fantastically and other things that can be improved. Some methods or variables may be specific to a given state of adaptation or anthropometry. Nevertheless, hearing about it will help all of us gather more data points of what did or didn't work, so stop by 70sBig.com and let us know.

Teaching is learning.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Justin Lascek holds a Bachelor's of Science degree in Kinesiology with an emphasis on Exercise Science. He holds a CrossFit Level II Certification and was on staff for the CrossFit Barbell Training Seminars with Mark Rippetoe. He has coached and trained a variety of populations including: Special Operations soldiers from every branch of the military (including international teams), football, track, baseball, basketball, softball, and swimming athletes, paraplegics and cancer survivors, obese and skinny folks, injured trainees requiring rehabilitation, CrossFitters, Olympic weightlifters, and raw powerlifters.

Justin is the writer and editor for 70sBig.com and travels and teaches workshops on lifting mechanics and programming. He regularly coaches, consults, and writes programs for trainees, athletes, and soldiers.

His approach to programming for fitness or performance revolves around strength training with barbells and using efficient high intensity conditioning. Justin played a year of collegiate football and competed at the USA Weightlifting Senior National Championships in 2010. He regularly trains and often performs experiments to gain personal experience for writing topics.

Justin enjoys reading, writing, training, and playing with his two brindled American Pit Bull mixes.

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This is the foundation on which The Advanced Texas Method is built on. Released in May of 2011, this book details what the Texas Method is, how to transition into, how to adjust it to garner progress, and how to use it for various sub-goals. For more information and to purchase, please see www.70sBig.com/books.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Due to the high volume of e-mails Justin receives, he asks that you contact him in the comments of 70sBig.com, on the 70's Big Facebook Fan Page, or via the 70's Big Twitter.

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